

AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH

What follows the establishment and the realization of the establishment of the phenomenon

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Abstract

Although not incisively approached in the text, the places of departure of this research are the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto and my involvement in the Research Institute in Art, Design and Society. Serving as my background for some years now, their contexts and the activities developed in both institutions were highly influential and motivational for the take-off of the present work. In the late months of 2014 I organized *Conversations on Artistic Research* in the Faculty of Fine Arts in Porto, an international yet focused event for the discussion of several topics concerning artistic research. For *Conversations* was invited an ensemble of speakers whose inputs hugely contributed to the ensuing definition and re-definition of my interests, concerns, and the direction of my research. The strengthening of individual relationships and the affinity found bridging my own research interests and those of some of these guest speakers were decisive in the further phase of my studies. This last year was the time when conditions were created for me to temporarily leave the grounds of the Faculty of Fine Arts of University of Porto and investigate *in-loco* two of the most important European academies where artistic research currently actually happens – and whose pioneering spirit is worth to mention as well.

In the first semester of 2015 I was a visiting researcher in the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts of University of the Arts, Helsinki, and, afterwards, at the Royal Academy of Arts, The Hague, part of Leiden University. The two institutions are well renowned in the international scene of artistic research expertise, and their staff members perform influential roles at different levels in the field. With this in mind I thus planned my move to become acquainted with the organization, discursivity, and practices of research in arts higher education in the specificity of such cutting-edge environments. My stimulus was based on the conviction that if I wanted to know more about artistic research, I had to reach the places where artistic research supposedly happens and to contact with the people that presumably work on it; I had to be directly in touch with artistic research that is happening right now in order to more significantly investigate my object of study without depending exclusively on third parties and mediated discourses. Therefore the personal impression on artistic research that I construct and converse through this thesis is not limited to the interpretation of the overflow of literature that theoreticians produce since some years to the present day, but it is, more accurately, based on what these artists, students, teachers and researchers do and speak about in the legitimated contexts of artistic research – especially those two that I visited abroad, and the one where I grew up as a researcher.

AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH is a thesis stimulated by the necessity of clarification of the state of

affairs in artistic research. Perceived as a grey area, artistic research has been nonetheless considered in the published literature a disciplinary field, since its establishment in academic contexts is thoroughgoing and its recognition as a specific stance in the art world field has also been consummated – even if in a perhaps unorthodox way, as intends to show part of this doctoral text. In the present day, artistic research entails teaching positions and departments, official reports, funding programmes, political decisions, research, essayistic literature and exhibitions, all in the name of an idea of ‘artistic research’ that is anything but consensual. The growing body of materials that has been giving shape to artistic research is not rarely conflicting and supported in tensional relations, dividing academics, artists and policy makers in different degrees of enthusiasm and skepticism. It was, in part, the contradictory positions felt within the academic environment that has constituted the impetus that triggered and fueled this research, and the reason for my preference for the term ‘phenomenon’ when referring to the reality of artistic research.

Through this text I have argued that the tensions that largely characterize the identity and activities in the field of artistic research do not necessarily preclude neither limit it, but rather contribute to the fundamental dynamics of a productive field (in a resisting and disrupting perspective), instead of a *productivist* field (as soon as crystallization takes place, the field shifts from productive to *productivist*). In addition to the tension between productivism and *productivism*, others are explored while chapters unfold – iconoclasm and iconolatry, writing as artistic *medium*, benefits and harms of institutionalization, among others -, with special emphasis in the conflict between dematerialization and *new materialism*, a relation sketched as a possible digest of the current fragile yet potential situation of artistic research. Again, and besides the fact that the suggestion of a *new materialism* rises from critique, it is not meant to dictate an early end to artistic research. On the contrary, the title AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH suggests a fresh page turn: in the aftermath of the recognition that the phenomenon is established as a disciplinary field, it is time to step further the preparatory, technical and bureaucratic conversation, and to finally shift from the talk about doing artistic research to actually do artistic research. This small yet fundamental difference in the positioning towards artistic research is what possibly divides the heritage of inconclusive literature that has seriously embargoed the field from its eventual realization in a joint venture. The effectiveness of artistic research is to become real in the making of art practice and research in the academic context, in a permanent dialogue (instead of either denial or submission) with the constraints that simultaneously inhabit the art world and the academic structures.

However, this effectiveness is something slowly becoming and happening since only less than a decade. For what is yet to come in what concerns this realization of potential, ultimately the practice of artistic research, this thesis argues that it should be regarded with self-restraint, considering that what is at stake is simply the affirmation of a territory of activity, in its proper idiosyncrasies, and by no means a land of salvation (from a view in overexcitement) nor a sterile ground condemned from the outset (from a view in skepticism).

Keywords:

Artistic research; phenomenon; tension; productivism; dematerialization; new materialism; academy; artistic practice; Porto; Helsinki; The Hague.

Resumo

Embora não sejam directamente abordados no texto, os pontos de partida desta investigação são a Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto e o meu envolvimento no Instituto de Investigação em Arte, Design e Sociedade. Servindo-me de pano de fundo há vários anos, os seus contextos e as actividades desenvolvidas em ambas as instituições influenciaram e motivaram o impulsionar do presente trabalho.

No final de 2014 organizei *Conversations on Artistic Research* na Faculdade de Belas Artes do Porto, um seminário internacional focado na discussão de temas de investigação em arte. Para *Conversations* foram convidados oradores cujas apresentações e pontos de vista muito contribuíram para a sequente definição e re-definição dos meus interesses e questões, e, portanto, da direcção da minha pesquisa. O reforço das relações individuais e a afinidade encontrada entre os meus interesses de investigação e alguns entre os exibidos pelos oradores foram decisivos na fase mais adiantada deste estudo. No último ano criaram-se as condições para que pudesse, temporariamente, deixar a Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto e investigar *in-loco* duas das escolas europeias mais significativas no que à investigação em arte diz respeito. São locais onde investigação em arte é uma prática, e das quais o pioneirismo, especialmente no caso finlandês, merece ser mencionado.

No primeiro semestre de 2015 fui *visiting researcher* na Finnish Academy of Fine Arts da University of the Arts de Helsínquia, e, posteriormente, na Royal Academy of Arts, de Haia, que se associa à Universidade de Leiden para manter o programa PhDArts. As duas instituições são reconhecidas na cena internacional de investigação em arte, e os seus membros desempenham papéis influentes na área. Tendo tudo isto em conta planeei a minha ida de modo a familiarizar-me com a organização, discursividade e práticas de investigação em artes no ensino superior na especificidade destes ambientes instauradores. O meu estímulo baseou-se na convicção de que, se eu queria saber mais sobre investigação em arte, eu deveria, então, envolver-me nos locais onde supostamente acontece investigação em arte, e entrar em contacto com as pessoas que presumivelmente trabalham investigação em arte. Eu tinha que estar em contacto directo com a investigação em arte que está acontecer agora, a fim de investigar de forma mais significativa o meu objecto de estudo, sem depender exclusivamente de terceiros e de discursos mediados. Desta forma, a impressão pessoal sobre investigação em arte que eu construí e explanei nesta tese não se limita à interpretação do fluxo de literatura que teóricos vêm produzindo desde há vários anos até aos dias actuais, mas é formada, mais precisamente, com base no que esses artistas, estudantes, professores e investigadores fazem e dizem nos contextos legitimados de investigação em arte - especialmente aqueles dois que

eu visitei fora de Portugal, e este onde tenho sido investigadora.

AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH (DEPOIS DA INVESTIGAÇÃO EM ARTE) é uma tese estimulada pela necessidade de clarificação do estado da arte na investigação em arte. Percebida como uma área cinzenta, a investigação em arte vem sendo, no entanto, considerada como um campo disciplinar na literatura publicada, dada a verificação da sua implementação em contextos académicos e dado como consumado também o seu reconhecimento como um posicionamento específico no mundo da arte - ainda que de forma talvez pouco ortodoxa, como pretende mostrar parte deste trabalho de doutoramento. Actualmente, a investigação em arte gera cargos de ensino e departamentos, relatórios oficiais, programas de financiamento, decisões políticas, investigação, literatura ensaística e exposições, tudo em nome de uma ideia de 'investigação em arte' que é tudo menos consensual. O corpo crescente de materiais que tem dado forma à investigação em arte não raramente é conflitante e apoiada em relações de tensão, dividindo académicos, artistas e decisores políticos os quais se movem com diferentes graus de entusiasmo e cepticismo. Foram, em parte, as posições contraditórias sentidas em ambiente académico que constituíram o ímpeto e alimento desta pesquisa, tendo-se também tornado na razão para minha preferência pelo termo 'fenómeno' para referir a realidade da investigação artística.

Ao longo deste texto vou argumentado que as tensões que caracterizam grande parte da identidade e actividades no domínio da investigação em arte não impedem nem limitam, necessariamente, mas antes contribuem para uma dinâmica que é fundamental à manutenção de um território produtivo (olhando numa perspectiva de resistência e ruptura), em vez de um campo *produtivista* (*productivist*) (assim que a cristalização ocorre, o campo produtivo passa a *produtivista*). Além da tensão entre o produtivismo e *produtivismo*, outras são exploradas no desdobrar dos capítulos - iconoclastia e iconolatria, escrita como *medium* artístico, benefícios e malefícios de institucionalização, entre outros -, com especial ênfase no conflito entre a desmaterialização e *novo materialismo*, uma relação esboçada enquanto possível sumário da actual situação de fragilidade, porém imbuída de potencial, em que se encontra a investigação em arte. Mais uma vez, e além do facto de que a sugestão de um *novo materialismo* advém de uma visão crítica, não é minha intenção ditar um fim precoce à investigação em arte. Pelo contrário, o título AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH sugere uma viragem de página: na sequência do reconhecimento de que o fenómeno está já plenamente estabelecido como um campo disciplinar, é altura de ultrapassar a conversa preparatória, técnica e burocrática e, finalmente, passar de falar sobre fazer investigação em arte para realmente fazer investigação em arte. Esta diferença aparentemente discreta é, todavia, fundamental no posicionamento em relação à investigação em arte, e é o que, possivelmente,

divide a herança de uma literatura em geral inconclusiva e embargadora, daquilo que é a realização por meio de uma *joint venture*. A efectivação da investigação em arte torna-se real na intersecção da prática artística e da investigação no contexto académico, em permanente diálogo (em vez de em meras negação ou submissão) com os constrangimentos que habitam simultaneamente o mundo da arte e as estruturas educativas.

No entanto, esta efectivação é algo que vem acontecendo apenas recentemente, há menos de uma década. Para o que ainda está para vir no que se refere a esta realização de potencial, ou seja, à prática de investigação em arte, esta tese argumenta que esse potencial deve ser considerado em moderação, atentando que o que está em questão é tão simplesmente a afirmação de um território de acção, em suas idiossincrasias próprias, e não a miragem de uma terra de salvação (a partir de uma visão apaixonada) nem de um terreno estéril condenado logo à partida (a partir de uma visão céptica).

Palavras-chave:

Investigação em arte; fenómeno; tensão; *productivitism*; desmaterialização; *novo materialismo*; academia; prática artística; Porto; Helsínquia; Haia.

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PRØLØGUE

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VIEW OF THE SEA OF SCHEVENINGEN, 1882

OR

THE GREAT ESCAPE, 2002

In these vibrant times we live in, information through different media outlets is almost too readily available to the point of sensationalism and inundation. The ubiquity of reality T.V is one such example. Reality T.V blurs the lines between reality and fiction and becomes performative. I am interested in these performances. – Ato Malinda research synopsis at PhDarts 2015¹

While at The Hague I went often to Scheveningen, a coast area of the city with a very extensive seaboard. Touristic postcards witness a crammed beach with bodies and bodies exposed to the yearly scarce sunrays of Dutch summer, highly contrasting with the greyish scenarios I found in most of my rides to the coast. The pale light generated what looked like a green ground in the photos I took. The sunlight landscape fixed in postcards was something I could not see myself during my stay, but only perceive it in its absence. I had the frame in front of my eyes, and the picture was in my head.

As I cycled in the sidewalk and captured the beach resort commerce style of summer businesses, from heated restaurants and bars, to kiosks and clothes stores, I very much recalled the late nineties Algarve. I then pictured Algarve in Scheveningen, through the signs left in for the colder days: stores closed, ice cream announcements but no one selling them, deserted beach, waving hairs pushed by wind blows, limited areas for upcoming esplanades, people bundled up, nostalgia.

In my digression, I sighted the strange creature that is the Pier. Simultaneously a figure of the past and a symbol of the future, in the Pier converge the void of an abandoned architectural structure and the sci-fi fantasies of the passer-by. It is sort of a hole in time, or a time lapse, where chronology blurs.

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.phdarts.eu/DoctoralStudents/AtoMalinda>. Last access on: 30.06.2015.

From the Pier you can have a view from the sea at Scheveningen.

From the coastline you have a view of the sea at Scheveningen. And since 1959 also a view of the Pier - actually of the second edition of the Pier, since the original, built in 1901, was destroyed in the Second World War.



Figs. 1 and 2. The Pier, 2015. Used with permission.

Having died in 1890, van Gogh did not have a chance to see the Pier, otherwise one can only wonder what variations his early paintings could have gone through. In any case, by 1901 he was not living in The Hague anymore. As a young man, Vincent lived near Scheveningen only by the years 1882 and 1883. He went to this location after having worked in his brother's art agency.

Vincent didn't come to witness the sci-fi structure of the Pier, neither the touristic landscape that today surrounds the city's *ex-libris* Kurhaus Hotel, another attraction being spotted in the sunny Scheveningen postcards. Built in between 1884 and 1885, it was a period whereupon van Gogh was no longer in The Hague, but installed in Nuenen, right before leaving to Belgium and Paris. That's perhaps a reason for Kurhaus not being drawn in any of his works from around that time. Only a couple of years before the construction of Kurhaus, van Gogh portrayed Scheveningen landscape quite frequently. It was 1882 and he depicted a stormy scene to which he called "View of the Sea at Scheveningen", where he is not envisaging the land, but turned his eyes to the gloomy seascape seen from that part of The Hague. In contrast to sunny Scheveningen postcards, van Gogh found at the sea a hazy atmosphere which he depicted with green shades in the sand and sea. Experts say the painting was executed at the spot, in the easel painting open air tradition largely pushed forth by the Dutch artist, with energizing brushstrokes, as prove the sand grains mixed in the surface of the oil layers.

These were the early days of Vincent van Gogh as a painter. In 1882 he was living shortly in The Hague and has painted and drawn several pictures of the shoreline, alternating between sea captures and human everyday activities ashore. Even so being an early career oil, "View of

the Sea at Scheveningen” became a very famous work. In 2002 it was valued in US\$3 million, yet an event at the end of the year has boosted its value three times the former price. It thus became famous and high priced. On the early hours of the 7th of December of 2002, the van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam has awakened with a decreased estate. It was Saturday and two hours prior to the opening of the museum.

After smashing the glass with a covered elbow, two men entered the Rietveld designed building through a window on an upper level and quickly left carrying two artworks authored by van Gogh. A 4,5 meters high ladder was needed for the climbing and left at the crime scene. The escape was accomplished by sliding a rope, also abandoned for the policemen to retrieve. The robbers’ procedures sound quite simple, ironically almost admirable. Apart from the not enough fast reaction of police officers, nothing can be seen as having failed in security plans. The director of van Gogh Museum, John Leighton, recognized that every museum is exposed to similar situations and, seemingly, they could not prevent it in any way. The idea is that in the future it seems plausible to carry out a similar plan with high probability of success. The works taken were “View of the Sea at Scheveningen” (painted Aug. 1882) and “Congregation Leaving the Reformed Church at Nuenen” (painted Feb. 1884).



Figs. 3, 4 and 5. Van Gogh Museum, 2015. Used with permission.

The episode relates to the idea of lost artworks and the presence through absence. This is a presence which is ironically owing to its simultaneous absence. Art robbery, in this sense, can be approached in the context of an image-breaking or iconoclast attitude. Robbery, as well as the image-breaking are most often due to motives completely detached from the theme depicted in the artworks. Aesthetic accession is inexistent, and thus the quality and the content of the image are totally neglected. Market value is the guiding force, along with other pragmatic conditions such as size and weight. “View of the Sea at Scheveningen” is not big sized. Its dimensions are only 34.5 cm x 51.0 cm. The portability of the two paintings might have been decisive for their abductors, much more than the scenes portrayed or any biographical remark of the objects. But this is my mere speculation.

During the 2000s in The Netherlands a rumor was spread about the activity of an organized gang stealing art. The *modus operandi* of the heist of these two van Gogh's in 2002 followed the same procedures of other robberies sweeping the country in the same year: all the three cases registered (Haarlem, The Hague and Amsterdam) used the smash and grab technique, deluding security systems and escaping from the crime scene before police's arrival. Add to this the previous years' occurrences (2001, Amsterdam, 1999, Bilthoven and Bussum), and the public sphere soon was inquiring whether there was a common motivation supporting such dark period for Dutch art estate. Nevertheless, most of the robbery art cases end with the successful recovery of the objects in a safe condition and the arrest of criminals, but to this day are still missing both "View of the Sea at Scheveningen" and "Congregation Leaving the Reformed Church at Nuenen".

There is something worth a note about Dutch law that might have an influence in these art heists. There is something deeply ironic that insuflates with more infatuation the performance carried out by the two men that invaded van Gogh Museum on that 2002 morning. Apparently in The Netherlands art stealers can lay claim to legal ownership of a work of art they have stolen and kept for 20 to 30 years (the first for private art, the latter for public art). This unforeseen law turns The Netherlands into art thieves' paradise. However, beware it is not all roses. In order to reap the rewards, a criminal has to be able to prove the authorship of the robbery.

Security cameras were turned on at the van Gogh Museum on the 7th of December of 2002. They have captured two male individuals forcing entry into the building and taking state property with them. The fake mustaches they wore were not enough to mask their real identities. A year later, Henk Bieslijn was caught in Amsterdam and convicted 4 years. Octave Durham – known as The Monkey by authorities for previous involvement in art crimes – got 4 years and a half and was arrested in Puerto Banús, a luxury suburb of Marbella, on an international warrant. Puerto Banús is a marina built in the 70s that backgrounds wealthy tastes and is popular among international celebrities. Rolls Royce, Ferrari, Lamborghini and other supercars, as well as impressive yachts are common in the neighborhood and brought to the sight of possible buyers by dealerships. Five million people visit the place annually, coming from northern Europe and the middle–East countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Salvador Dali's 3,6 tons "Rhinoceros dressed in lace" adds the convenient artistic scent. Puerto Banús is what looks like an interesting place to sell art to private collectors. Even if stolen art is the case. What Octave Durham was doing in Puerto Banús is beyond public knowledge. One can only guess: was he enjoying a small fortune earned at the costs of van Gogh's paintings? Was he trying to sell them yet? Was he just hiding the police and passing time among rich

people?

The crime scene in Amsterdam was left full of evidence. Incriminatory remarks were so numerous that it is not out of the question that these thieves actually wanted to be identified. The paraphernalia included the rope, the cloths used to involve their arms in the glass breaking, the hats they wore that kept many hairs, the surveillance images. Even though the two men always denied, to this day, any involvement in the robbery, both were charged and condemned. However, in face of so obvious evidence the fanciful press proposed a script suggesting they actually intended to be charged. According to the gap in the Dutch law, this was the necessary detail worth assurance in advance for them to prove, in the coming year 2032, the legal ownership of the two van Gogh's paintings. A few millions of American dollars in exchange of 4 and 4 and half years in prison do not sound too absurd but ironically a good business.

For the effect, it was likely they were staging a deskilling *mise en scène*. This is, all in all, still an open question. It could be the case that "The Monkey" and his accomplice were performing amateurism, in such a convincing way that we would no longer believe what our eyes see but only trust what our analytical and rational competence tells us to. The final image is incomplete. The image is broken. The paintings are gone but what is left speaks aloud.

Nevertheless, deskilling strategies in the art world have this double ironic effect which are findable in a more general level in most aspects of the conflict of art meeting academy as research (or, in other words, of artistic research): what at first sight sounds like a critical review of the *status quo*, risks to become a reinforcing act. In a critical reaction to the current economy of knowledge, the art world has recently been conducting several events dedicated to the exploration of the idea of deskilling (Claire Bishop²), but a critique of this criticism is also needed since the ideas behind deskilling seem biased from the beginning, since deskilling is only possible after the learning of a skill. At first sight this sounds a contradiction as a strategy to counteract the economy of knowledge, even with the risk of becoming a nourishing gesture. In a metaphorical way and caricature mode, Durham and Bieslijn proved to be professional amateurs, which they needed to be in order to break the system(s) – both of security and law. Luxury art, yachts, and businessmen are known to be a profitable triangle. In 2010, Roman Abramovich acquired his third private yacht and gave it the name Eclipse. It is a 170 meters giant worth US\$420 million. Protected against missiles and *paparazzi*, two of the most disquieting threats in high seas and in marinas (such as Puerto Banús?), Abramovich still had

² The conference took place in Amsterdam, at the Rietveld Academy, curated by Claire Bishop and the theme was *deskilling* and its new aesthetic possibilities. More info: <http://clairebishopresearch.blogspot.co.uk/2015/03/are-you-still-alive-rietveld-academie.html>. Last access on: 30.06.2015.

one problem left awaiting resolution: the interior decoration of the yacht. A Bloomberg article (Reyburn, 2010)³ accounts for the issue and launches a range of names of artists, art dealers, and collectors as possibly having decision over the contemporary art purchases of Abramovich – remember he was the recent buyer for both Francis Bacon and Lucien Freud works, and a tycoon of this caliber entering the art market is always good news for the business. For the present purpose, the gossip names on charge of decorating Abramovich's new acquisition are not important. The highlight here is that there is a super-protected yacht, money and a taste for purchasing art.

Following these events, Water McBeer Gallery and Andrew McClintock state to have curated an exhibition hosted in Roman Abramovich's yacht Eclipse, in 2013. A very particular one astonishingly announced as "a very exclusive 48 hour viewing of Vincent van Gogh's 'View of the Sea at Scheveningen' 1882" (McClintock, 2013)⁴. The singular exhibition was not only an opportunity to see the painting but also to purchase it, knowing in advance that "fifty percent of the proceeds will be donated to the Iranian Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL) at the request of the owner". According to the gallery public statement, the event resulted from a delicate and generous negotiation that actively involved the philanthropist Sheikh Khalifa, President of the United Arab Emirates and emir of Abu Dhabi, and the anonymous owner of van Gogh's artwork. The unforeseen fabulous exhibition is reported to have happened in May and to have taken place in faraway international waters in the proximity of Dubai. Andrew McClintock and the Water McBeer gallery are programming a series of "black market" auctions in the likes of this. So why didn't Octave Durham and Henk Bieslijn keep the paintings? Wasn't the apparatus left on the museum on purpose? Didn't they want to be found? Weren't they deskilled thieves, or are they really just sloppy amateur thieves?

Some photos of the exhibition are to be found in the Water McBeer gallery's webpage.



³ Retrieved from: <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=adeWnMSygy00>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁴ Retrieved from: <http://watermcbeer.org/andrewmcclintockvangoghveiwoftheseaatScheveningen.html>. Last access on 30.06.2015.



Figs. 6 to 11. View at the Sea of Scheveningen, 2015. Used with permission. Images of Water McBeer and Andrew McClintock exhibition hold in international waters. Their website⁵ shows images of the opening, depicting, among others, Damien Hirst, Koons family, the recently deceased Chris Burden and USA President Barack Obama.

A different report spots “View of the sea at Scheveningen” at a different location. Previously to Water McBeer’s exhibition, the painting is said to be seen in Monaco. More precisely, it was reported aboard a yacht in the marina of Monte Carlo. These are the words of James Twining narrating Tom’s occasional sighting of the artwork:

Up close, the yacht was even larger than it had appeared from the shore – perhaps 400 feet long, with sheer white sides that rose above him like an ice shelf... Tom counted five decks in all... Treading stealthily, Tom made his way up a succession of steep teak-lined staircases to the main deck... The second open doorway revealed the main sitting room. Hanging over the mantelpiece was a painting that Tom recognised as the *View of the Sea at Scheveningen*, stolen from the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. This room, too, had been set up, although in readiness for what looked like cocktails rather than breakfast: champagne cooling in an ice bucket, an empty bottle of ‘78 Chateau Margaux standing next to a full decanter, glasses laid out on a crisp linen cloth (Twining, n.d.)⁶.

Tom is Tom Kirk, a retired art thief, appointed to help FBI in the investigation of a Caravaggio painting stolen 40 years before. What he couldn’t know is that he was about to find van Gogh’s painting while investigating in favor of Caravaggio. James Twining is reporting a much bigger conspiracy case involving grave robbing, antiquities smuggling, secret warehouses and famous museums. The case eventually received the name “The Geneva Deception” and is published by HarperCollins Editors. Twining’s website shows a photo of the luxurious yacht moored in the harbor at Monte Carlo:

⁵ Retrieved from: <http://watermcbeer.org/andrewmcclintockvangoghveiwoftheseaatScheveningen.html>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁶ Retrieved from: <http://www.litmir.me/br/?b=123072&p=54>. Last access on 30.06.2015.



Fig. 12. Perolus, 2010.

After looking at dozens of pictures of luxurious yachts made available by the extensive catalogue of Google, the identity of the mysterious vehicle was finally revealed in my investigation. Its similarities led me to Perolus. Perolus is part of the fleet of Roman Abramovich. For two times the stolen painting of Vincent van Gogh is to be found in Abramovich's facilities. Maybe it is just a coincidence.

This is how the story ends.

Open-ended.

While 2032 doesn't get to December, we can only guess about what took Octave Durham and Henk Bieslijn to enter the Rietveld designed building of van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and remove two art pieces from the main exhibition hall. They might be 43 years-old now, as both aged 31 at their arrest. Thirteen years have passed by and although the sentence is served they still claim innocence. To my knowledge Roman Abramovich was never interrogated by the police neither the FBI. His name was never related to our anti-heroes story except in this narrative.

There is no concrete evidence of van Gogh's "View of the Sea at Scheveningen" to be in the possession of Abramovich. Some images of Water McBeer's exhibition suggest that the painting and its damaged frame – as it already was back in the time when it was purchased by the father of the lady who afterwards bequested it to Dutch state – have been, at least temporarily, on his properties. However and in the first place, it does not imply him directly, and secondly, these images are broken and incomplete because while they've created information on the one hand, they lack information on the other. They are here the reification of the productivity of iconoclasm: something is born out of absence.

I put the 'anti-heroes' epithet to Durham and Beislijn in regards of the appreciation of the art world. Like any anti-hero, they would be said to be the good and the bad, loved by some and hated by others in the art world. The two are regarded simultaneously as being iconoclast and the iconolater. For the former they have made the images disappear. But an artistic point of view would regard them as iconolater heroes: after all they risked themselves to remove artworks from the deadly museum. Wherever these works are today, they are safe from

harmful mediation and mediators. In the trail of Boris Groys' "The curator as iconoclast" (2007), purists would welcome the art market rather than the museum or anything touched by a curator. In the art market, as in private collections, art works are by themselves, freely engaging with their viewers who are no longer disempowered.

No rumors have been spread of either Durham or Beislijn being spotted in Venice recently. The Biennale opened last May, after the pomposity of "all world's futures" as a punch line. ISIS is said to be participating with a whimsical pavilion. Although Hyperallergic source states that Okwui Enwezor and Paolo Baratta have publicly informed that ISIS' application to integrate The Biennale was officially rejected, there is nothing they can do to stop the Islamic State to approach by water. The Floating Pavilion of Art Destruction is said to be their representative despite the organization's refusal, and "all world's futures" never sounded so frightening. On the Floating Pavilion the "...participatory programming will allow visitors to bring artworks onboard and create viral videos of their destruction with ISIS members... Visitors will be invited to queue at the boat for a ritual of destruction using a golden auction hammer against a green screen that will be livestreamed for viewers around the world", as quoted from the online New York forum (Hyperallergic, 2015)⁷. The same source also forwarded: "A few months ago, we realized that there's a long tradition of what ISIS has been doing in contemporary art, and what better way to continue our mission than to go to the source," al-Dulaimi, the curator, said in the press conference. "By encouraging the public to bring us art — be it their own or pieces taken or 'liberated' from others — we are tapping into the increasingly experiential and embodied nature of aesthetic experience. Everyone is talking about the potential for art to go viral, and we know how to do that better than anyone". Talaat al-Dulaimi has made a few points here. The Floating Pavilion is but one among other experiments, in the era of experimentalism of post-Contemporary art, into the aesthetic regime — a regime in which *aestheticization* (Groys, 2014) is a sort of image breaking or, in other words, an iconoclast act. "So it's OK for 'artists' to destroy artworks and call it art, but not OK for us?" one ISIS artist cited by Hyperallergic has inquired. There are no reports of his Dutch nationality, so it is not likely that he could be Octave Durham or Henk Bieslijn, either trying to get rid of "A View of the Sea at Scheveningen" or, eventually, performing the anti-capitalist artist looking to destroy the typical object of art-as-commodity.

Wherever van Gogh's painting is, the capitalist within us hopes it has not been physically destroyed. Not because we acknowledge that the absence of this painting has made it more present and more valuable, but because there is also this Romantic scent that, as much as time

⁷ Retrieved from <http://hyperallergic.com/195279/isis-to-exhibit-floating-pavilion-of-art-destruction-at-venice-biennale/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

goes by and society changes, it will never abandon the art world and its actors. And despite this Romantic persona is not directly dealing with the rigor of money numbers, still it deals with the praise of the object of desire that is art-as-commodity.

One of the struggles associated with a critical performance of artistic research lays on the commitment of artist researchers to fight self-evidence of art and all its hegemonic structures, ranging from explanatory meta-narratives to economic permeability ultimately regarded in awe as the driving force of artistic endeavors. In a certain way research is seen to have the capacity – or regarded in the hope for it – to critically analyze the influence of such market forces and defy them in a variety of creative strategies relying on artistic practice. The *dematerialization* movement of Conceptual Art (Lippard, 1973) that bridged the 60s to the present day is an artistic narrative unfolding against the limiting and distorting objectification carried out by liberalist entities and market forces of a far more complex intellectual process leading the making of art. Artistic research can be appointed as a consequence of this development. Ironically, though, individual and institutional research highlighting the disruptiveness and critical advantages of research in the practice of art – against these and other menaces – are paradoxically generating an overflow of published materials, university departments, and expertise jobs across Europe, USA and Australia. What becomes abundantly clear is that in the aftermath of *dematerialization* of art and the advent of artistic research (as an immaterial artistic process), a *new materialism* (Simon, 2013) is increasingly taking place, as “... a compulsion to produce, to be sure, that not only pertains to the manufacture of objects, but also to the realm of discourse...” (De Baere et al, 2006, p. 7).

When the cure and the disease seem to be both taken by the powerful neoliberal governing forces, what is left is the charming utopia. Michel Foucault has previously explained that power relations are dependent on resistance acts, and their inter-dependency is what assures a dynamic situation that makes possible their refinement and survival. In art as well, interesting situations are dependent of the acknowledgement of institutionalization consequences and the possibilities left blank for a creative research to explore and disrupt. Utopia comprises this productive sense of irony: a conscience of inescapability that is what, at the same time, allows for continuity in the attempt of counteracting what is believed as indestructible – even if there is so little margin, if any, to stay outside the system that constantly subjectifies and instrumentalizes us.

A new economy of power relations is what the charming utopia offers, something more centered in micro-politics: in more empirical, local and immediate targets, instead of general abstract and future issues. This where is prompted from the power of the specificity of complex narratives, in place of general, abstract and generally inconclusive meta-narratives.

Octave Durham and Henk Biesliijn are the charming protagonists of one of those micro narratives. They have performed one of those exciting cinematographic escapes in the art world. And I have just fixed a frame, the final scene right before the credits fell in.

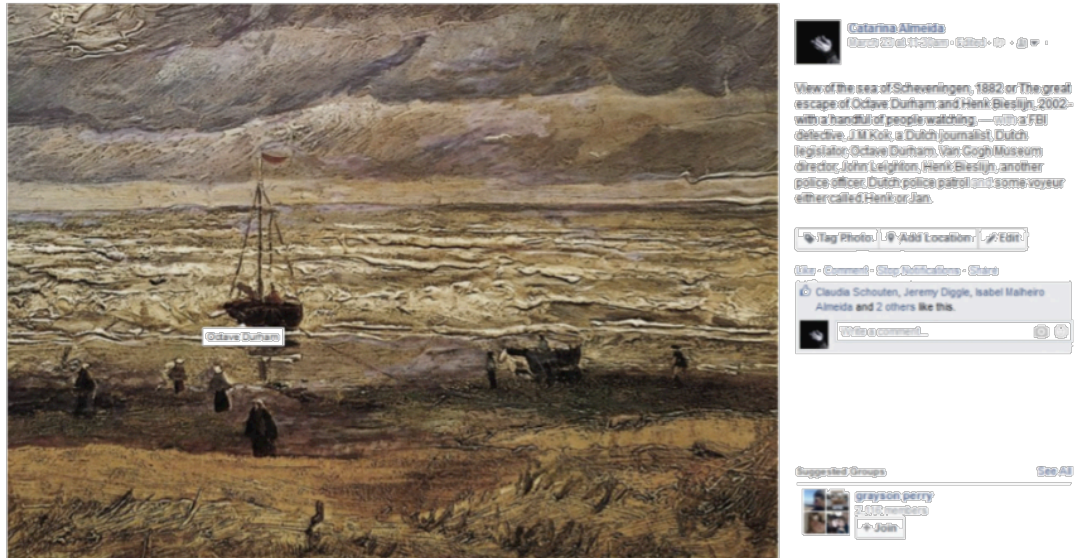


Fig. 13. View at the Sea of Scheveningen in my Facebook wall, 2015. Used with permission.

INTRODUCTION

The story of Van Gogh's painting is the starter in the introduction of issues this research is addressing. As I see it, it is a research-based story, and so is this thesis. For the making of the prologue I've carried out advanced searches in press, authority sources and art entities, and I've visited the national Dutch archives in The Hague. I've collected reports on different aspects of the events I wanted to associate following what looks like a very research-like procedure. It is a showcase of a mix of art robbery, a police case, luxury and mystery, and arguably the script follows a series of previously established research-like routines.

The short story is purposely merging facts and fictionalized facts. I've invented nothing, except the cadency of reported events, or what could be called the montage. Everything else exists somewhere on the web: images, quotations, names, details given. The prologue is about constructing a complex narrative through the overlapping of diverse dimensions of reality, taking full advantage of the inconceivability of a handful of occurrences: their succession appeals to a sort of absurdity to which I identify with on an artistic level.

This doctoral work will not become any more experimental – in whatever terms – than it did for the "PROLOGUE" occasion. Although developed with artistic research in mind, this work is not an exercise of artistic research. It is, in turn, a study about artistic research.

In the background of the whole prefatory construction, I am interested in figuring out what means to be research-minded when it comes to art practicing and, simultaneously, in how to creatively handle writing, since it is usually perceived by artists as a constraint rather than as a proper and auspicious artistic *medium*.

Just to start with, a connection between writing and researching has been established as I have related the research-minded attribute with the use of writing. This is important to note, given that I will refer many times to an intellectual/conceptual dimension in art domain that is intimately connected with the employment of writing methods and the possession of research skills in the contemporary artist.

The exercise I have performed in the "PROLOGUE" is part of a larger idea of creating complex narratives in an artistic research environment, as an inventive way to use text for more creative ends than it is commonly envisaged by artists. I develop conceptually the underlying circumstances of the narratives and their potential (and the circumstances and potential of artistic research understood in a broader sense, given that the narratives are a mere possibility among others) during chapter 2: "FRAMEWORK", more precisely in the section "Micro-politics in art as complex narratives". Here takes place an adaptation of Michel Foucault's ideas of

micro-politics and the division of subjects, appealing to an alternative economy of power relations more centered in the local, the particular, and the individual, rather than in abstractions and generalities that, for their disconnexion and impersonality, objectify subjects instead of letting these same subjects explore their subjectivities. My intention is to release the idea of writing from being inflicted as a hegemonic and controlling academic tool at the service of a society of knowledge, without margin for other more significant perceptions. I thus intend to experiment with alternative usages of writing that could play a more significant and individualized role for subjects, focusing on their peculiar, sometimes very local concerns. These subjects are specifically artists. Having said this, horizons are to be maintained, howsoever, so that this writing does not become completely alienated from the contexts in which it is practiced and from the usual habitat of those practicing it. This is the reason why artistic research is required to be highly dialogical, given that it bridges two conflicting stances of power, academy and art world, which are constantly challenging each other through this connector of research.

Before proceeding with the topic of writing and its many deriving subtopics, I find important to do some guidance remarks on the territory where is based artistic research. Its environment is very specifically the academy. It is in higher education grounds that artistic research is hosted, even though artistic practice is also playing a fundamental part in its identity and definition. This is a main point of the current doctoral investigation and needs to be set clear: the fixed circumstance of artistic research is its institutional ground. I consider this institutional ground to be the academy, even though other authors, among which is Esa Kirkkopelto (2011), points the academy as an example among other institutional possibilities. It is my choice to consider the requirement of this academic ground as a locating measure of the phenomenon, since it is otherwise already too wide and uncertain to be approached. What this ultimately means is that every other procedures pursuing research in the arts but lacking the academic ground will not be considered artistic research. External circumstances are therefore partly defining artistic research, and not anything of its presumed essence or nature is setting the rule. Moreover this decision enables me to release my center of attention from epistemology of artistic research (or what could be the kinds of knowledge being produced by certain methods and, in view of these circumstances, then one could be facing artistic research). I am thus freer to turn eyes to the power relations and motivations guiding the formation and development of this phenomenon since I have pragmatically limited it – geographically speaking.

Returning to the ideas comprehended in chapter 2: “FRAMEWORK”, these aim at supporting and explaining the mechanics experimented in the “PROLOGUE”, as a flexible exploration of the act of writing and narrating across reality and fiction that is presented as an alternative to

the bonds of obsessive originality and of scientific presumptuous unequivocalty that from both sides can restraint the artist researcher. Being more flexible, this writing consciously plays with the different dimensions in which it is involved (reality, fiction, academic rules, artistic experimentalism, etc), released from the tyranny of originality, and seeks to keep in mind the challenging horizons previously mentioned. The introduction of this dynamics seems an interesting way to start off my digression about the importance of writing in the fulfillment of academic expectations, but also its value as a tool defiant to the instances of power from which it arguably emerges from: the academy and its regulations, inserted in a wider knowledge economy part of a society of control. As a defiant tool, writing can still be a valid option to answer the desire for disruptiveness that leads artistic endeavours. Until this point through this "INTRODUCTION" I have been trying to let in some topics and features of the phenomenon of artistic research which lightly hint how this thesis has approached its complexity. After approximating writing and intellectualization in a research-minded profile, after fixing the institutional ground of artistic research, and after suggesting the creative and contrarian potential of writing as complex narratives, I will dive deeper on this writing issue and continue to unveil other subtopics of artistic research and of this thesis from there. Further on, in "Writing as creating complex narratives" (part of chapter 4), I go back to the theme of complex-narratives-making-as artistic-research with more accuracy. There, process is emphasized all the way. Narratives are envisaged as processes of artistic research and as processes of thinking the process of making art, or, even, as processes of actual art making. In line with Magnus Bårtås' thought, whose work is inscribed in similar bases, these complex narratives, which he calls "work stories" (2013), condense in one place and at a time a variety of more complicated events that receive further attention in other explorations. This is exactly the strategy employed in the "PROLOGUE" of this thesis, where topics are at first only lightly introduced in order to be developed afterwards in sequent pages. Notwithstanding, Bårtås goes deeper in his narratives – which are his art works - with the idea of a procedural art making that resembles storytelling. Esa Kirkkopelto also calls on the process to state that it is a *medium* that enables change to be performed as soon as "inventions" made visible in the process result in new "institutions" (2011) (but Kirkkopelto disables change when these "inventions" are "institutionalized", as he differentiates "instituting" and "institutionalization"; but I will return to Kirkkopelto's ideas in the final part of this introductory text). To think the process opens space to think the subject who performs it, contrary to when the tonic is pointed at the object detaching it from the subject. The process and the subject that performs it are thus placed under the spotlight. In the final part of "Writing as creating complex narratives", I place the procedural tonic in the subject, and not in a resulting object, which

leads me to the suggestion of the subjectivity of the “artist-as-narrator” – just to reinforce already existing terms of other authors, among which are “artist-as-producer” and “etc.-artists” (Basbaum, 2003). Subjectivity is problematized in a topic of its own, deriving from the conclusions on the impact of artistic research in contemporary art at the final part of chapter 5, in section “How research is being made present in the subjectivity of the artist”, and also developed more properly later in this “INTRODUCTION”. I will go back to it in a while. For now I stay longer with writing and its associated subtopics.

From the outset that the act of writing assumes a pivotal role in my investigation of artistic research. I see it as one of the girders that support the existence of this phenomenon, either as a procedure (of academic and/or artistic anchorage), as an identity mark owing to artistic research institutional ground, and as a subjectivity trait to be found on research-minded artists. The contrasting appreciation that writing receives from academics and from artists is a matter of interest in this study and the subtopic to which I will turn attention next.

The writing issue is the feature that simultaneously assigns artistic research with scholastic acceptance for the one side, and with artistic mistrust for the other. It is the converging point of skeptics who condemn an allegedly corruption of art’s nature, and of supporters who claim for equality for art within knowledge community and for the scientific validation of artistic outcomes. Problems start when such validation depends on art meeting certain conditions, sometimes having to adapt to imposing norms without much opportunity for negotiation.

The tensional condition of writing within artistic research is largely characterizing the phenomenon. In section “Writing as translation”, part of chapter 4: “*WRITING MEDIUM. Writing (and who is) the contemporary artist*”, I call on this almost aprioristic tension between academic condition and artistic prejudice that frames the practice of writing, while I simultaneously explore concepts and writing modes borrowed from authors such as Walter Benjamin and Jean-Luc Nancy, and glanced with the commentary of Mika Elo. Such tumultuous relationship is also the reason why a plea for a more creative use of writing is made a propos of the complex narratives.

From a rich variety of sources, I have collected a generalized opinion that writing is a delicate topic in art higher education. Art education, including third cycle programmes, is still very exposed to the Modernist heritage in which artists are raised to be against any hint of rules, authority and power structures. According to Camiel van Winkel, there is a Romantic self that simply will not go away (van Winkel, 2013). Writing is regarded in compliance with the mentioned stances, and therefore is target of mistrust by the more purist, the more Modernist artists, and the more Romantic ones who are still fond of the gifted genius, instead of the democratic and conversing artist. Resistance to what are seemingly academic routines, as to

the classical articulation of reading and writing – effects of a controlling society -, is the exposed wound of artistic research. Resistance to reading and writing is actually an incorporated trace of subjectivity of many artists and, generally speaking, of students of art, since these have adopted the idea that to be an artist is to be in the opposition – and, obviously, against writing as well, given that it is regarded as an instrument of power and regulation, through which they are assessed and their works are accessed and explained – through what most of the times results in double work (Lesage, 2013). Romantic tradition, poetics and installed preconceptions of what is to be an artist, are still having great influence in present-day artists. That is particularly visible within academy, where these conceptions are daily being interfered with, reinforced, discussed or confronted. Rather generalized, the resistance is nevertheless felt with different intensities among the students of every artistic doctoral programme. During my time as *visiting researcher* in Helsinki and in The Hague, I have become familiar with this generalized opinion, which I personally also shared while I was graduating in Porto, and so did many of my colleagues at the time. I have found it in different cycles of education within academies, from bachelor to doctoral programmes, as evidence my collected testimonies: conversations with teachers of bachelor level, with tutors of the doctorate, and with students themselves. This perception is shared in the interviews available at the “Annexes”, with for instance interesting commentaries on the felt resistance of their students, either by Erik Viskil and Janneke Wesseling from the PhDArts, and also in testimonies by students who, although understandable do not share the same resisting positioning – one has to account that they are voluntarily enrolled in programmes, so they are likely to have a different perception on this matter -, also spot identical mistrust to intellectualization, and writing in particular, in other artists fellows.

The readings I did of students’ research synopsis both in Helsinki and in The Hague, and their up to date written materials, as well as some finished dissertations, in art and in artistic research, have been quite insightful for my personal understanding of how the writing task is being articulated with practice in these programmes. This matter is of visible concern from the outset: official documentation of the study programmes (e.g. the introduction lines on the website of PhDArts and the instructions of the Individual Writing Project assignment of PhDArts curricular part, or the writing seminars agenda of TAhTO programme) usually denote a special attention dedicated to writing tasks and research goals, which, *per se*, indicates that the matter is relevant and not less delicate. In face of the sensed resistance and difficulties sometimes guessed and sometimes experienced, in general, by the enrolling artists, the staff of PhDArts in The Hague has prepared documents to guide the students’ writing practice, and is particularly careful of the mentioned Individual Writing Project, which is one of the initial

tasks the accepted candidates have to go through in terms of research and academic writing. Quite interestingly, and unexpectedly to some, such tensional entanglement is not narrowing results, as could be thrown at first sight, but instead is providing challenging elements to fuel the practice. This tensional aspect of artistic research is not necessarily a fragility. Writing is established in artistic research as the bridging element between art and academy, as well as an enabling element that propitiates the needed documentation, discussion and distribution of the work done. The connection between academy and artistic practice is also being met with particular emphasis in moments of public discussion. In a derivation of writing habits, open symposia and research seminars are constantly taking place for the PhDArts group in The Hague to train their presentation skills and argumentation, and are part of the routine of TAHTO students in Helsinki.

For as much as published authors' work is important to guide and push forward the work of these students, the latter are the ones who more realistically move in the field and thus shape it at each gesture they make. They have this responsibility and aspiration, and it is something quite present and felt among some of the people I had conversations with within these programmes. They know they are leading the way. Moreover this perception was a strong motivation for me to go and experience closer the work done in these places.

The access to these students' gestures (texts, interviews, conversations, etc.) made me realize the variation that the relation between writing and practice goes through in the context of artistic research, and how different results can be when they are conceived from more entangled articulations, or when they result from endeavours situated more evidently either in the practice or in writing, but which, together with the other supplement, make the whole of the doctoral research. There is space for many approaches, some more practical and others more theoretical, but in the end they all cross both grounds and only become complete at this combination. In one way or the other, more emphatically or not, writing is occupying a pivotal place in the phenomenon of artistic research, sometimes being the target of criticism, while largely contributing to structuring the territory, and keeping open an extensive range of possibilities that do not necessarily limit the field but, to my view, actually pushes it forward. In Porto, at the Arts Education doctoral programme, the only artistic research thesis (according to my understanding of what means to be considered artistic research, that is) that has been accomplished until now has opened up possibilities that augur interesting future blends of artistic and academic parts. The doctoral work of Inês Vicente, defended early in 2015, is a balanced set of written material and an artistic production⁸. The public presentation for her

⁸ The name of the thesis is "Darkness performing sensitiveness", and it was publicly defended in the first months of 2015.

degree included a performance of her authorship to which she was dedicated in her written part. Contrary to what has been tradition in the Faculty of Fine Arts, particularly in the Arts Education doctoral course, Vicente's contribution is insightful to the extent that it proved that a dialogue is possible between the academic constraints and artistic freedom (or is it artistic constraints and academic freedom?), something that avoids "institutionalization" by "instituting" difference and new possibilities – just to use some of Esa Kirkkopelto's terms, to which I abundantly resort to in this text. In Helsinki I have come across complex yet quite stimulating writing processes in the sample of texts that I've read while visiting the TAHTO group activities. I have found especially noteworthy the rousing link that Henna-Riikka Halonen is exploring between her writing part and her artworks. In both parcels the creation of *mise-en-abyme* situations and the production of complexities are characteristic features. Her case seems to meet the advocated by Mika Elo, which, in turn, is influenced by Walter Benjamin, that is the notion of "writing as translation" (I have a section in chapter 4 where I explore the notion). Halonen's writing and artistic practice almost overlap, as she applies the same "mechanisms of making sense" in one place and in the other, achieving, nevertheless, different results (although with intriguing similarities). "Writing as translation" is never a case of saying the same things through different languages, but is about producing meaning around the same problems yet using different settings. Thus, and according to Jan Kaila's conviction, text and practice in artistic research are to occur separately, and to dream of the junction of both in a doctoral environment is utopian and let alone desirable, since: "[p]reventing the split, merging the theory and the works into one whole, would call for the creation of a set of standards for artistic research that would favour artists who make only textual works (in practice, texts). This would be absurd for Finnish art" (Kaila, 2008, p. 7). My parenthesis now: this merging is one of the initial ideas that I have abandoned while investigating artistic research. At first I thought that the challenging at stake in artistic research was precisely the interflow of theory and practice, that is of writing and art making, into something unforeseen and exceedingly exciting. The problem in this difficult merging was, I thought back then, located in language itself, since there was no known word that referred to theory and practice simultaneously. At the time I was even concerned with inventing new words that could serve this purpose and presented them as artworks – or as "expositions" to the Research Catalogue maintained by the Society of Artistic Research. Although in a different manner of Henna-Riikka Halonen, also Itay Ziv (a colleague of TAHTO group) is looking for the accordance of style of writing and format in text, where he adopted epistolary writing forwarded to an unknown or imaginary remittee who is his "Mr. DFA". Hereby the setting better fits his topic which is escapism. Ziv uses escapism as both a methodological tool and as artistic topic in his research. Halonen and Ziv's projects

receive further attention in the already pointed “Micro-politics in art as complex narratives” (chapter 2) and “Writing as translation” (chapter 4).

Later on, when I was already in The Hague, I witnessed that writing there is also perceived as a highly important element of artistic research. Although approached differently, writing tasks seem to receive special attention both in the Nordic and in the Dutch contexts. Perhaps due to University of Leiden’s historical weight and heritage, at PhDArts the staff is apparently adopting a more formal and academic posture in regards of the use of text, whilst in Finland their concern with writing is less related to scientific writing and more focused on its artistic dimension and entanglement with the research concerns of the students. The Finnish main concern is that the artistic dimension of artistic research is never damaged in favour of writing. All and all, the differences in the way to approach and to consider the role of writing are many from place to place, and it is these different approaches that assure the vital dynamics and unexpected features to it.

At the same time, a number of authors, among which are for instance Jan Svenungsson (2007) and Magnus Bærtås (2013), has contributed profusely to the exploration of the potential of writing in an artistic level, by prospecting text as a creative means. The more significant explorations are authored by individuals directly involved in artistic research programmes and some who are also artists. The role of writing in bending the hinges linking academy and art world ranges from more artistic to more scholastic conceptions, articulating either more interestingly or less involved with the artistic practice. Work is still ahead to find out unanimous and coherent blends between writing and artistic work at a doctoral context. But perhaps unanimity is not an aim, and this oscillation between varying degrees of conformity and disruptiveness, is, between this and that, what makes writing in artistic research a performative and productive endeavour for the time being. This instability is also what grants writing special care in programmes and what makes it a hot topic in debate and motif for investigation.

The delicacy towards writing is spread to other approximate ideas that have become associated in artistic research: the act of writing is ontologically close to conceptualization and intellectualization trends in art making, and all presumably introduce the practice of research and arguably share common grounds in politicization and academization of art. Thus to stand against one of these configurations is usually to stand against the others, dividing supporters and skeptics of artistic research from this line on, with the latter refusing the intellectual tendency.

The assemblage of these ideas is nonetheless important to glimpse the environment from where emerges artistic research as a phenomenon and to sketch a context to place it. Speaking

of setting up a context, the following citation of John Baldessari is giving the backdrop to go forward with the resistance to writing and to introduce the subtopic of the duality of iconoclasm/iconolatry: “Do you sense how all the parts of a good picture are involved with each other, not just placed side by side? Art is a creation for the eye and can only be hinted at with words”. In 1966-68, John Baldessari has painted “What is Painting”⁹, from where I retrieved the fragment pasted above. The most interesting thing about “What is Painting”, is that it is a painting of a text. And with it Baldessari says “Well, this is what painting is”. Although at his background is Conceptual Art, John Baldessari stands out among his Conceptual peers for a quite singular career. With “What is Painting”, John Baldessari, who’s been an influential figure in a process of intellectualization of art without, however, ever risking or misleading his artistic horizon, reminds the viewer very vividly of this intellectual dimension of painting. More precisely in an artistic research context, this intellectual direction is made evident through the emphasis placed upon words in “What is Painting”, and in Baldessari’s indirect suggestion that a mental operation takes place to complete the pathway begun by the eye. In the above citation, Baldessari signals a subjective dimension through which painting is eventually and fully accessed, something the eye alone is unable to accomplish. The way Baldessari values the textual dimension over the image is a symptom of the intellectualization to which art has been reverting to since Conceptual Art. After the partial return to painting of the 80s-90s, and the explosion of the digital and interactivity that followed, the conceptualization that once populated artistic proposals in the 60s of the twentieth century is coming to the forefront again. However, this conceptualization has been redesigned. Current conceptualization does not stand in semiotics anymore; it does not consist in purposely iconoclastic endeavours either, although some naysayers will look at it and name it after that – and it is in this conflict that gains relevance the opposition iconoclasm/iconolatry that I initially explore in the first entries of the second chapter “FRAMEWORK” (especially “Image-breaking and iconolatry. *Iconoclast aestheticization*”, but also the sequent “From autonomy to *new materialism* or how we moved from *experientiality* to *experimentalism*”). The conceptualization in question, largely characterized by what received the name of a “linguistic turn” in the twenty-first century (Mick Wilson and Irit Rogoff both used the term, among others), is striving for the readjustment of the image, but not for its destruction, disappearance, despise or abandonment, and neither for its glorification. It is in the sense of a readjustment that I have called on the notions of iconoclasm and iconolatry for a balanced view. Both are brought to meet, in an ironic and metaphorical way, the different points of view

⁹ Retrieved from http://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/john-baldessari-what-is-painting-1966-68. Last access on 19.05.2015.

of skeptics and supporters. Skeptics and opponents of artistic research consider such intellectualization to be damaging, if not destroying, art, and this is why artist researchers are envisaged by them as iconoclast subjects. On the other hand, those who are highly passionate and fond of the artistic quality therefore are iconolaters and they leave too short space of allowance for research to happen in an artistic level. Artistic research ideal place would be somewhere among one thing and the other. In fact, artistic research is very relating to image, object and performance making. In view of that, writing appears not as executioner of the image, not as the tool for its appraisal, but as a new actor in the play. Writing earns a renewed importance and costume; it comes now as research. Not that writing and research are synonyms, yet the first is certainly an essential part of the process of the second. With writing, the image – and art-making in general – receives a new input, faces new challenges and possibly brings on new results. Instead of being neglected, trivialized, destroyed, the image is re-thought. This is where lays the creative and productive dimension of a supposedly iconoclast act, since from wreckage are built new things. Or alternatively an escapist act, if it was Itay Ziv speaking, and running away from the image, escaping iconolatry tyranny, would become an artwork and art making.

Although the tensional point of iconolatry and iconoclasm is not intended to be a main topic of the phenomenon of artistic research, it is nevertheless developed and included in the set of themes of this thesis for the problematic aspects associated with the value of writing in an artistic environment, and the criticality it generates from the side of the artists who are considered anti-academic and, therefore, skeptics in what concerns the intentions of artistic research. Previously I have mostly referred to the resistance felt by art students with writing procedures (or procedures related to an intellectual dimension), and now the iconoclast/iconolatry dualism stands for a wider semblance of artistic research immersed in criticism and contestation. It is thus motivated by the opposing standing points in regards of the role of writing as an artistic and research procedure that iconoclasm and iconolatry are approached: is writing in artistic research an iconoclast act, since it competes with the totalitarian image? Are artist researchers iconoclast subjects since they arguably mislead art making? Or are they the “artists-artists” (Basbaum, 2003) who are iconolaters instead? Idiosyncrasies of artists’ writing and the iconoclast/iconolatry duality that such act contains are obviously intertwined and, like in a complex narrative, are hard to grab and analyze separately. I therefore have presented one in relation to the other.

Along writing approached as a topic of its own, and to which I’ve been referring to for the most part of this “INTRODUCTION”, also other aspects are brought to the fore related to the master topics already mentioned of complex narratives, and of the tensional framing of writing.

Similar to the previous, these are smoothly introduced and appear in relation to others from which they derive. The experimentation on writing in the “PROLOGUE”, with loose usage, recycling of known facts and fiction, and flexible montage, seeks, for instance, to demonstrate that artists’ quest for novelty and originality in the post-contemporary art and artistic research domains has to be relativized (more on this item in sections “From autonomy to *new materialism* or how we moved from *experientiality* to *experimentalism*” (chapter 2), “Micro-politics in art as complex narratives” (also from chapter 2), and chapter 4). The theme of novelty is further problematized in the repercussion it carries out to the development (or stagnation) of artistic research.

My argument is that the young age that many assign to artistic research is preventing its development. In face of something perceived as novel, inconsistency, uncertainty and speculation are permanently allowed as almost natural states, even when the alleged novelty lasts for a too long period of time. Although perceived as novel, the truth is that artistic research has been establishing for a couple of decades, and is in full force established for the last ten years – the chapter 3: “ESTABLISHING the phenomenon of artistic research as a field” is about this setting up. The section “Axioms and *productivism*” (final part of chapter 2) works this argument, being *productivism* the term employed to refer to the great amount of literature and speculative materials produced at the excuse of the novelty state of artistic research. In other sections I add other insights and framework to the argument of novelty so that *productivism* becomes a more contextualized and coherent idea. Section “From autonomy to *new materialism* or how we moved from *experientiality* to *experimentalism*” (chapter 2) allows me to introduce the idea of a *new materialism* in the association of contemporary art and artistic research, with direct consequences to the notion of *productivism*, and in chapter 5: “THE IMPACT OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN CONTEMPORARY ART” I look for the formation of this *new materialism* – being it the appearance of a set of materials out of presumably dematerialized practices - in manifestations of contemporary art. It is in the meeting of research endeavours (and its associated acts such as seminars, workshops, and debates) and contemporary art that gains life the “artist as producer” to whom Henk Slager is pointing out in *The pleasure of research* (2012).

Such “research endeavours” and “associated acts” – or “gestures”, as I’ve called them before in this “INTRODUCTION”, referring to textual productions, organized seminars, workshops, debates and others of the kind, to which the staff of PhDArts (and artist researchers in general) seem to be fond of - are constituting altogether new artistic materials. In other words, the traces left by these artists or the produced materials that this specific kind of contemporary art – if we accept, at least for a moment, artistic research as being part of contemporary art – are

of this kind: seminars, workshops, debates, public discussions, theses and dissertations, published texts. Add to this the fact that Conceptual Art and most of post-Conceptual Art has developed to avoid the 'art as commodity' conjuncture, struggling against capitalism and market totalitarianism, and thus favouring a sort of *dematerialization* in the works for the occasion. In view of this, the new *materialism* resulting in the present day is ironic and paradoxical, to say the least. Since most of these dematerialized works hugely depend on documentation, new materials are generated at large-pace. When these new materials contribute to stagnate the field in speculation instead of pushing it forward, a whole new dimension is to be assigned to *productivism*, according to what I explore in the final sections of chapter 6: "Create a problem and then offer a solution" and "Lively publishing culture about not making clear what artistic research is".

Other deriving aspect to which I have slightly referred to in the beginning of the "INTRODUCTION" is the importance of the research skills in artists engaging in artistic research. The term gained relevance to me after I have heard it from one of my interviewees. To be research-minded musters many of previously referred subjectivities of the contemporary artists, such as artist-as-producer, artist-as-narrator, and artist-etc. I regard this research-minded characteristic as a relevant feature to handle writing procedures, the production of meaning, and other aspects attained to the image of artistic research that I see being formed in my study. Such subjectivity is also usually in tension with the anti-academic artists, who consider the process of intellectualization a menacing distortion of art.

Also Henk Slager appears to highlight the importance of investigative skills or, in other words, the ability of the contemporary art practitioner to understand the contexts where his or her productions occur and are to be presented, as well as the capacity to manage a variety of disciplines – or materials, to say so – in order to produce alternative meanings to the institutional *status quo*. The practice of artistic research supposes what seems to be a new subjectivity of the contemporary artist: "[w]hat becomes abundantly clear is that today artists should especially be able to present and contextualize their projects" (Slager, 2012, p. 7). The skills needed to produce are also needed to present the work, an act currently understood as a production in itself. The producer makes and presents the work. The approximation of research, writing, conceptualization and intellectualization, combined with the subjectivity of research-minded artist, reinforce a phenomenon, field and practice that have been given the name of artistic research. This new way to be an artist is certainly one of the core topics that the present study goes through, and to which section "How research is being made present in the subjectivity of the artist" (chapter 5) is dedicated.

I came to the conclusion that the investigation of the phenomenon of artistic research is necessarily bonded with the acquaintance of a recently formed subject. To put the emphasis on the subject, instead of the object, is actually, I think, the most important conclusion to which this work leads to near its final remarks. Although this insight does not reduce the complexity of the theme, it actually dislocates the anxieties bonded to the characterization of a type of object that should correspond to an idea of an object of artistic research into the very act of performing an action. A verb is dependent on a subject that performs it. When I started this research I was determined to differentiate artistic research and artistic practice, but my focus was back then put on the outcomes, instead of in the process. My initial inquiry was approximately 'what is the difference between a product of artistic research and a product of art making?', supported on the idea that a difference was necessary to be found to distinguish these two activities of different natures. My time in Helsinki and in The Hague was of major importance to evolve this demand, to exchange points of view, and lastly to shift my attention from the object to the subject. Some conversations and commentaries I've obtained through the interviews (whose edited transcriptions are available in the "Annexes") were important to this change of focus, as was the reading of an interview made to Henk Slager a propos of The Research Pavilion at 2015 Venice Biennale. In this interview, Slager admits that not much difference exists between a regular exhibition and an exhibition organized under the motto of artistic research, except for "that it [research exhibition] includes a lot of discursive moments, so in the same space there are lot of events, activities, seminars that also contextualize the projects and create other perspectives. It offers an ongoing process"¹⁰. The shift to subjectivity serves as an answer to my earlier inquiry. On the other hand, Slager's emphasis on "discursive moments" piloted my investigation on chapter 5, where I ascertained the influence of artistic research in contemporary art by verifying the existence and entanglement of those "discursive moments" (seminars, conferences and workshops, for instance, with other similar terms such as "gestures", "research endeavours", etc.) with artistic practice in art world venues. This new subjectivity, allied to the effects and causes of its development (again writing tasks, intellectualization of art making and other similar ideas), is, therefore, what shapes the current idea of artistic research. Its intersection with artistic practice is of utter importance, since artistic research is reasonable only if placed in an artistic realm, and therefore in close contact with the art world. I have attempted to direct part of this investigation to the exploration of this fundamental relationship with the art world (especially in chapter 5), in order to make up the other already over explored in literature relationship of artistic research and academy.

¹⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/blogs/research-pavilion/birth-pavilion>. Last access on 20.06.2015.

In the course of artistic research subtopics, the dimension of knowledge production in art is also worth to be noted. It is entirely dependent on the writing procedure, as its *medium*, and stands conceptually in the assemblage of writing, research, and intellectualization, from where the phenomenon of artistic research arises. The “PROLOGUE” *A view of the sea at Scheveningen* serves also as an entrance door to this specific inquiry: is this research-driven or research-based art, the one about creating complex narratives, producing knowledge? Is it like putting together a certain amount of ideas, topics and interests in the pursuit of some kind of meaning in the subjective sphere? In a sense, it could be like finding meaning, or constructing meaning, in what were previously scattered elements.

All and all, the “PROLOGUE” suggests that from previously existing objects, documents, props, one inquires a new narrative and calls on the virtual meaning of these elements. Meaning is therefore constructed, through a procedure embodying an anti-modernist attitude, or, leastwise, a post-modernist one. Interested in the production of meaning, the artist is no longer obsessed with the quest for novelty; instead, this narrative-creator artist has found a wealth of possibilities in a directory of the past now at disposal. Research methods are thus called upon the dexterity through which such artist manipulates the archive and inscribes it in lively circumstances in the pursuit of meaning. Resulting narratives are supported by a balance attained from the combination of artistry and an acute conscience of research potential, of the circumstances of documentation, of presentation and of context, resembling Henk Slager’s view that “[w]hat is at the core of the current discourse are artistic constructions and interdisciplinary activities which, going ‘beyond the studio’ seem to be able to occur anywhere if they can adequately connect or respond to a given or required context. Topical visual art, then, should most of all be ‘research-based’ and ‘context responsive’. This renders art the freedom to deploy a range of contexts such as architecture, design, film, history, biology, sciences, technology, and philosophy” (Slager, 2012, pp. 7-8). Nevertheless I do not mean to suggest a fixed *modus operandi* that would pretentiously aim to define the practice of artistic research, not even the practice of research-based art. The creation of complex narratives, where reality and fiction overlap during the development of a topic to bring on meaning, is simply an example of a way to match writing, research, and artistic proposals in the specificity of these contexts. The “PROLOGUE” is therefore more a personal rehearsal on how text can be flexible and writing can be used – and so does research – with a more creative purpose in mind than it is generally assigned to the academic sphere. This is, however, and as I have noted in the beginning of this “INTRODUCTION”, the closer I get to an exercise of artistic research in this doctoral work. My motivation is to investigate artistic research, which is, as the thesis goes

by, still independent from the exercise of making artistic research. For the time being, to investigate on artistic research does not forcibly require to do artistic research. Nevertheless, by the end of this study, I will conclude that it is about time to shift from thinking about doing to actually doing it, for the sake of the potential contained in the field. It is time to break the “novelty” chimera and leave mere abstract speculation in favour of the locality and specificity of practice. It might seem a contradiction, but, at a personal level, this more cogitative investigation was my shortage now fulfilled so that I could reach that sort of turning point in an unavoidable and decisive way.

“Reflexive dimension and contemporary art” in chapter 4, and “Knowledge in contemporary art” in chapter 5, are both intended to develop further the idea of producing meaning in an artistic research context, preferring to turn the focus from the epistemology of this knowledge to the circumstances of power relations, social changes, and artistic developments that, altogether, allow for this thinking of knowledge in art. In this sense, particularly the academic environment is important to be considered in the analysis. The importance writing currently receives in higher art education is due to a set of occurrences that have been changing the mission of the university in contemporary society and the role that art can occupy in the current economy of knowledge. After expatiate for a while in this subject in the “FRAMEWORK” chapter, especially in the last part “Axioms and *productivitis*”, it is in the section “Small antechamber: university in the knowledge economy” of the fourth chapter that the changes in university are treated more willfully, and the effects of the Enlightening tradition and the hegemony of reason in Western thought are highlighted.

The re-encounter with the academy, or rather the redefinition of the role of the academy by the end of the twentieth-century and beginning of the twentieth-first, assembles the main scenario upon which the recent developments of artistic research are to be placed. Jan Verwoert concludes that “the academy today is no longer simply an institution for art education but also a primary site for the reception and production, presentation and collection of art” (2006a, n/p). Artistic research is probably more an effect rather than a cause of this role reformulation, embodying the new gaze of a few contemporary artists, “who rely less on the market to sustain their practice the seminar room has therefore become just as significant as the gallery space” (Verwoert, 2006a, n/p). Nevertheless, some authors also stand in the position of arguing that artistic research arises from the desire of artists to enter the community of knowledge producers, which eventually leads to a change of role of the academy in the art world – the interview of Janneke Wesseling in the “Annexes” shares her point of view on this aspect. Artistic research developments are thus generated by a conflux: “The expression artistic research connects two domains: art and academia” (Borgdorff, 2010,

n/p)¹¹. The perspective held by this text is positioned at that intersection, and although “[e]very artist does research as she works, as she tries to find the right material, the right subject, as she looks for information and techniques to use in her studio or atelier, or when she encounters something, changes something or begins anew in the course of her work” (Borgdorff, 2010, n/p), artistic research is here envisaged in “the emphatic sense”. It “... unites the artistic and the academic in an enterprise that impacts on both domains” (Borgdorff, 2010). Consequently, all research done by the artist in an independent framework, that is in the studio and public space, outside the influence of an art world institution or educational programme, even though following research-like procedures, will not be acknowledged here as artistic research, as I have noted in the beginning. To be recognized as such, the action has to definitely be staged within a specific institutional environment. It is a debatable perspective, but, in any event, it is the anchor chosen to undertake this investigation and so to limit the object of study and the lens through which look at it. Summing this up, in this text, “artistic research is institutional research, research most often conducted in an art institution, for instance an art university” (2011, n/p)¹² - only to match the straightforwardness of Esa Kirkkopelto, whom I have quoted already to stress the institutional ground of artistic research in the beginning of this “INTRODUCTION”.

Kirkkopelto’s institutional perspective is more complex than just limiting the field. Besides placing artistic research within the realm of an art university, his “institutional research” is also addressing the outcomes as “inventions”¹³, not necessarily as something new but still as a process of finding, as *medium* or active potential to something else: “...artistic research does not only take place in institutions but it should also research institutions, take them as its object. By this, I mean not only the particular institution where the research happens to take place, but also institutions in a different sense: from the aesthetic institutions of perception and affect to current political institutions...” (2011, n/p). Inventions, then, will impact

¹¹ Retrieved from http://circostrada.org/IMG/pdf/KarlssonBiggs_Production_Knowledge.pdf on 11.04.2015.

¹² Retrieved from http://circostrada.org/IMG/pdf/Kirkkopelto_Artistic_Research.pdf on 11.04.2015. Esa Kirkkopelto first advanced his statement in 2008 in *New Start: Artistic Research in Finnish Theatre Academy*, *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 20.

¹³ Esa Kirkkopelto comes to the term “invention” as a qualification of artistic research that avoids institutionalization – by becoming itself institution. He says that: “The creative economy has resolved the problem by choosing to speak about ‘innovation’. If we want to name the end product, the outcome, the object of evaluation of artistic research projects, I argue that we should use another term, almost synonymous, but crucially more ambivalent, namely ‘invention’... Inventions are not necessarily recognized at first as something ‘new’ but they can also seem strange and surprising... An artistic outcome no longer manifests itself in its sheer originality, as pure invention. Rather it also shows and establishes its routes to discovery. In other words, the artwork becomes a medium of invention”. And: “The inventiveness of an invention is to be assessed in relation to institutions that surround and sustain it: we should ask to which extent an invention has the potential to change these institutions and, finally, why should they be changed?”. Still Esa Kirkkopelto says, resorting also to Cornelius Castorius: “Any discourse about art or science as means for developing and reforming society implicates that invention signifies institution in the active and affirmative sense of the term, as instituting (Cornelius Castorius). The founding of a new institution implies inventing and inventions are potential institutions... Artistic research makes up inventions which, insofar as they are of public utility, are also (at least potentially) new institutions, and thus carry out critical changes in the institutional status quo. As a consequence, the criteria for evaluation would consist of considering to what extent an artist-researcher is able to present their invention as an institution” (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p).

institutions as much as they are institutions themselves. Doing artistic research, following Kirkkopelto's ideas, is about "instituting", in the sense that making institutions is launching a framed and endorsed invention with transformative potential. It is in this sense that I consider research to have a potential for disruptiveness, something to be explored by artist researchers themselves. These instituting acts are made available to public discussion – like institutions are in the public domain - and are able to dialogue with previously existing institutions and, eventually, to change them.

The institutional character of Esa Kirkkopelto's artistic research addresses many vital questions in the agenda of this field and in the order of this thesis. It locates and limits the action, identifies and names the outcomes, and, furthermore, provides ways to assess them: "to what extent an artist-researcher is able to present their invention as an institution"? (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p)? From Kirkkopelto's digression arises an opposition between "instituting" and "institutionalization", as he affirms that if the artist is not able to present the outcome as an invention, then it most likely consists of mere institutional and academic art – this is exactly what to fight against to prevent the "institutionalization" (in an overbearing way) of artistic research.

The differentiation between "instituting" and "institutionalizing" might additionally provide the basis with which counteract the generalized resistance to research-like procedures in art. Such resistance argumentation is largely containing what I've sketched out as an iconoclast charge over these research operations as soon as they enter the artistic realm. Supported in Romantic and Modernist reminiscences that seemingly will never leave the subjectivity of the artist, creative endeavours paced with the production of discursive meaning, concerned with dialogical relations, and contextualized with the dimension of a society of knowledge, have become the target of contention in favour of the more purist and skeptic artists still relying in self-evident art and repudiating every attempt to make it speak, especially in academic contexts. The idea of iconoclasm is brought by as a double component: artistic research as an iconoclast endeavor, since it apparently aims at destroying art's nature, and, this new one, more self-critical and endogenous to which I come to in the course of this investigation: artistic research as iconoclasm for leaving the door open for research procedures to be regarded as a *new materialism* in art making. If "novelty" is not overpassed and if "institutionalization" (in Kirkkopelto's terms) is not avoided, then exists a real risk of artistic research to be feeding the *productivist* stream instead of disrupting it.

In the thesis that follows I will revisit these issues with additional inputs and embrace some others critical foci (chapter 6). In the end of the text we will hopefully have achieved an informative narrative-like panoramic yet dynamic portrayal of artistic research, and, in the best

case, turn to a new breath of artistic research focused on the real activities of designated artist researchers. That is what I have called the period “after artistic research”.

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Contrary to my initial design, it proved to be impossible to organize the numerous subtopics in clear separated chapters. Shortly after I started to reflect and put in words my thoughts about one of them, I was soon calling upon few of the remnants. The wide notion of artistic research relates to many fields other than itself, and also to the developments within each of those fields. The result is a thick and sometimes knotty network of references and relationships. Artistic research connects to every of these other fields through shared gestures, routines and technologies – like writing, reflection, and public presentation –, to the point they cannot be isolated and dissected separately. In this “INTRODUCTION” I tried to bring on a few of the main subtopics – almost like waypoints or milestones of the bigger structure of networked artistic research –, and so I preluded some basilar points of view as well as attempted a more detailed presentation of some themes. Among the basilar aspects that I wanted to enhance are the drawn dichotomy of skeptics and supporters of artistic research, dividing researchers and artists; the institutional ground as a necessary condition for the existence as such of artistic research; the relation of similarity between writing as a *medium* of artistic research associated with intellectualization and research, and artistic “gestures” and “discursive moments”, which include seminars, workshops, articles. With this and other founding conditions, I proceeded introducing the proper themes, such as writing idiosyncrasies and the creation of complex narratives as a possible practice of artistic research; the resisting positioning against writing tasks in higher arts education environments; the duality of iconoclasm/iconolatry as an exasperation and metaphor of the felt resistance; and the shift of focus from objects produced in artistic research contexts to the emerging subjectivities of the artist researcher as a research-minded artist. Other themes could be used as entrance doors for reflections, through which I go in the main text: an analysis of published literature and real and particular examples of doctoral works of artistic research for the evidenced establishment of artistic research as a field of knowledge (chapter 3); a more attentive look into the art world field in the pursuit of manifestations of the phenomenon of artistic research interfering with the discourse of contemporary art (chapter 5); and a few paradoxical or tensional aspects approached during chapter 6: “PAIN FOCI”. I thus decided to assume the complex reality of artistic research and present it in its complexity as well. Almost like a hyper-textual narrative, this thesis aims to embrace the topics and the features that seem more crucial to me preserving the networked set that is artistic research, and surely not without falling into repetition at times. To preserve

the complexity of entanglements into which is drawn artistic research, it was my choice to make this thesis an assemblage of smaller autonomous texts which preserve their independency of the wider view yet receive increased meaning if considered in their totality. With this in mind the repetitions and highlights that will appear are given a proper reason for being so. In any event, the totality of the text offers a more in-depth look rather than any of its parts separately.

Instead of seeking for a definition of artistic research in the circumscription of these many relations and gestures, I opted to bring to the forefront the most crucial aspects and especially the points of tension of the identity in-progress of the field. Nevertheless this text is not emerging from a pessimistic approach. It neither is a supportive strike for artist researchers. The thesis that now unfolds is a genuine attempt to understand the formation of a field of knowledge and its struggles for passing from being only a formally established field in the present to become a disruptive one for contemporary art and society. It is this shift to a new phase, more focused on the making, which the title of this thesis intends to highlight. "AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH" turns eyes to what is happening in artistic research clusters (especially in Finland and The Netherlands), where doctoral programmes and research in the arts are being practiced and happening as I speak, as a sequent moment of a previous years of speculative inquiry and theoretical debate but only very few practical work in the field. It is no longer the time to discuss the conditions of a new discipline, neither to digress on its legitimacy; it is the time to fuel the field that is evidently set through practice. The results achieved will be the ones providing the body of work of artistic research.

As I have found it, artistic research seems a "temporary autonomous zone" (TAZ), and in regards of its temporary character and autonomous (yet crossed by bonds) state, I've drawn my own procedure in the following manner quoted from Hakim Bey: "We have no desire to define the TAZ or to elaborate dogmas about how it *must* be created. Our contention is rather that it has been created, will be created, and is being created. Therefore it would prove more valuable and interesting to look at some TAZs past and present, and to speculate about future manifestations; by evoking a few prototypes we may be able to gauge the potential scope of the complex, and perhaps even get a glimpse of an "archetype." Rather than attempt any sort of encyclopaedism we'll adopt a scatter-shot technique, a mosaic of glimpses..." (Bey, 1985, n/p).

In order to make clear the object of study, a few assumptions are made from the beginning: artistic research exists as a disciplinary field; artistic research is ontologically institutional; and artistic research is intimately connected to artistic practice. As a backdrop of these issues stands the conviction that artistic research is much less a matter of epistemology, than it is of

artistic development, education and political concerns. In view of this, I will avoid deep incursions in the topics already extensively inwrought such as considerations on the varying terminology (arts-based research, practice-led research, art as research, artistic research, etc.), the kinds of knowledge it enables and the best fitting methodologies for artistic research. These are my starting points for a metanarrative on artistic research. They result from personal cogitations, observations, readings, conversations, and, inevitably, from a few changes of mind. Initial convictions have been redesigned or abandoned in the course of the four years of reflection on artistic research. If at first I was determined to find the difference between an artistic outcome and an artistic research outcome – because it had to be a difference!, or so I thought –, I have later accepted that artistic research is a matter of attitude and skills present in the subject, where resides the real epistemology and identity of artistic research, instead of in any objectifying characteristics that could be detected in the outcomes. If at first I was convinced that artistic research was a quite new very specific and original field of knowledge, whose particularity arose from a particular yet obscure merging of theory and practice, I have changed my mind only to understand that artistic research may not be such an original and unique field of knowledge, but a much simpler cross of parenting fields – art and academy –, and that this assumption of simplicity allows to depart from a speculative phase of the identity and methods of artistic research to a far more experimental and practice-oriented one (after a decade of literature production). And if at first I did not see the fundamental importance of being a practicing artist to also be, in addition, an artist researcher – given that I was focused in finding a new kind of being that was neither theoretical nor practical but something in between –, at the end of this investigation my conviction is that while artistic research needs the institutional ground of the academy as an ontological condition, it is of no less importance that it is also through art making that artistic research becomes artistic research.

As previously said, in order to preserve the networked condition of artistic research I opted to provide an approach that, instead of isolating the more relevant topics, tries instead to embody them in a narrative writing. As such, connections and repetitions are surfacing frequently, as are more personal notes on what constituted this investigation. Having said this, my text will combine observations in the outlining of artistic research as a field with the invocation of lived episodes and insights received in particular situations during the experience that I was living through while reflecting on this research. An important part of my sources and reunited material is therefore consisting in memories, notes and recordings I have collected in the three main grounds in which I have put forth my work, intellectually and also physically speaking: Porto and the Faculty of Fine Arts of University of Porto (and especially the seminar “Conversations on Artistic Research” that I have organized in 2014); Helsinki with the TAHTO

group, the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts and the Theatre Academy; and The Hague with KABK – Royal Academy of Art/University of Leiden and the PhDArts personnel.

In the annexes of the thesis are the integral edited transcriptions of the interviews I have conducted with a sample of people with whom I've crossed ways while pursuing the research. Their contributions are often fetched to colour my argumentation in the main text.

FRAMEWORK*in ± short essays*

This chapter is intended to introduce the key terms and tensional aspects that encompass the critical view of the present-day field of artistic research. Their reference is of pivotal importance to contextualize the perspective this text pursues to deploy, framing artistic research as an institutional creation focused on the artistic realm.

Image-breaking and iconolatriy. *Iconoclast aestheticization*

Iconoclasm is not strictly attained to violent destruction of icons. The notion has been broadening since the initial idea of the Byzantine periods of icons hunt, in the 700's and 800's. In a time when religion and politics were, some would agree, dangerously intertwined, the motivations for the rage against icons are impossible to depict as being purely religious or of exclusive political nature. They resulted, however, in the progressive removal between East and West in what was still, by that time, a unified Church. The separation has been aggravated through ages, and a current iconoclast re-enactment is taking place opposing western world and the Middle East. Religion is usually the excuse used to set a war in political ideologies. From the religious point of departure, iconoclasm finds easily legitimation in sacred texts. Even though Christians are, especially in the present, quite enthusiastic of divine figurative representations, one of the Ten Commandments points in the direction of icons prohibition: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness [of any thing] that [is] in heaven above, or that [is] in the earth beneath, or that [is] in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God [am] a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth [generation] of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:4, The King James version). As a consequence, the fear of this jealous God in straightaway interpretations led to the destruction of every object deviating from Orthodoxy of Catholicism of the seventh and eighth centuries. The image breaking was resumed in the sixteenth century, perpetrated by Calvinists of the Protestant Reform. The twentieth and the twentieth-first centuries have registered manifestations of wrecking iconoclasm occurring mostly in eastern countries and interpreted by the western world as provocations against their culture. The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas and the devastation of the Mosul Museum in Iraq are two of the recent retakes of iconoclasm opposing East and West, but experts say they are to be seen as resulting from political and not

strictly religious beliefs. In the western perspective, these actions are undertaken by 'barbarians'. To prove their universalist ambitions, Europeans, Americans, and their allies, too freely employ the term 'barbarians' to anything smiting their standards. Anything, that is, if undertaken by exotic strangers, distant foreigners. Anyone who is not them and so becomes 'the other'. However, western countries lack the same denunciation for similar acts perpetrated by western people. For such cases, justifications range between unaccountable acts, abnormal clinical episodes, unfortunate occurrences or artistic gestures. The iconic case of "Je suis Charlie"¹⁴ is not seen by European countries primarily as a consequence of Western violation of Eastern principles, but mostly as a tragic reaction motivated by lack of tolerance on the liberty of speech that Eastern people have towards the West. The portrait made by the press went more or less on the lines that the violent and homicidal reaction of two Islamic individuals on the boldness of Charlie Habdo's illustrators is an undue attack on universal freedom of speech. After the tragedy, West considers that the provocative caricatures of Muhammad should have been regarded as art works, where the degree of provocation would find more acceptance. Why weren't they? Add to that the fact the two attackers were Islamic and besides barbarians they are also called terrorists. Iconoclasm, if worth mentioning in this case, is completely owing to political convictions, and apparently unrelated to any artistic interference. Have not happened the homicides but only an attack on the caricatures, and the conversation would probably rely more in iconoclast themes than in terrorism.

The perpetrators of the destructive acts are well aware of the explosive effects of social media in today's world. It is not coincidence that these attacks are being recorded and fast uploaded into the World Wide Web, activating then numerous and varying reactions. Since the attackers are aware of the power of visibility and communication at disposal through networked channels, it is also safe to say that at this point the political mobile is stronger than the religious motivation to prosecute the several defacements and overthrows. And there is also a cultural dimension that should be highlighted, since through the destruction of icons, the perpetrators create new images. Such awareness also approximates their action of the complex role of being iconolaters at the same time that they are iconoclasts. Mikala Hyldig Dal, artist and student of PhDArts in The Hague, works the topic of images created by the act of destruction of other images. In the draft of her Individual Writing Project one could read: "I will suggest that a similar logic is reflected in the stream of decapitation videos that currently flow from the hands of IS, the aspiring caliphate expanding from the catastrophe of Iraq and

¹⁴ For more information read, for instance Sasha Goldstein article in The New York Times retrieved at <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/je-suis-charlie-charlie-trends-post-terror-attack-article-1.2068780>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

Syria, into a global media network: besides being gruesome acts of violence they can also be seen as symbolic castrations of “Western” imperial hegemony. The outlook of my essay is concerned with the act of ‘killing images’ and its relation to the act of killing human bodies to create images”¹⁵. Mikala Hyldig Dal’s example can be placed in the productive sense of iconoclasm, basically the idea that from destruction are built new realities, and that profound shifts of regimes are accompanied by a wave of devastation of the imagery of the previous ruling materiality. The change, as the act itself, is made present in the act of disappearing, as if the absence of the signs of the past – or, better, their ‘absence-ing’, their ‘going away’ and the public witnessing of such disappearance – were, simultaneously, the presence of a new regime. A destroyed city contains in the remaining debris the promise of a new future to come, the emergence of a new paradigm. When the background is art and culture, the iconoclast attitude will be regarded as the critical reaction that seeks to establish new ways, while refusing the previous aesthetics and ideological programmes. This text is interested in this attitude of the iconoclast, rather than in the iconoclast act in itself. The backdrop is art and therefore, even if at times also literal attacks are inflicted in works of art in exhibitions, the sense of iconoclasm that matters to retain is the metaphoric image-breaking: critically destroy some idea to give space to other meaning. When authored by artists, these iconoclast endeavors may as well become physical, whereas not in the vandal sense. The result of an artist intervening on art will be seen as an artistic intervention or artistic iconoclasm, not as a manifestation of raged iconoclasm. In common with all image breaking, even with the literal religiously and politically led examples previously mentioned, is that there is a willingness of nullifying previous icons, seen as idols, and of creating the space to settle new routes. This is common to religious, political and aesthetic reactions.

Modernism has offered an amount of iconoclast works of art, where physical interventions remade previously existing images or reformulated their meaning. Other modality of iconoclast act targets works displayed in exhibitions and public spaces (quite often considered as vandalism performed by audience members towards consecrated works of art). Timelier for the present text is the first thread imbued by artistic purposes and the background Modernist narrative of progress constructed in rupture after rupture, rather than the discussions of sacredness/desecration and vandalism. Hence Giorgio Agamben is invoked here for his *Profanations* (2007) implicitly suggesting that the possibility of profaning an image today is implying the constitution of another image as a consequence of the act of profaning or destroying the first version. This acknowledgment simultaneously is based in the Modernist

¹⁵ Since this document is not made public by the author, I will not include it in the “Bibliography” of this dissertation.

iconoclasm of the narrative of *avant-garde*, and also entails a productive possibility on iconoclasm as a strategy of art making. The extension of this notion of iconoclasm is what I intend to focus on. Even though Clement Greenberg himself did not align with the idea of rejection of the past contained in common interpretations of Modernism movements (1939, 1960), favouring, instead, the ideas of forwardness and continuity, and *avant-garde* as the finding of the path to continue moving, the notion of *avant-garde*, to which his name is strongly related to, and as widely perceived in a Modernist sense, is said to be about denial of the established world vision and the sighting of a better *status quo*. This movement, set in sequence, backed up by the idea of a progress on the run, was what motorized artistic movements and their world-changing attitude. It is true that today's artistic movement is no longer prompted by the conviction of an enlightening progress. Nevertheless, the evangelic trait partakes in several theoretical texts announcing the arrival of the next era, since 'the next big thing' is what a mediatized society is anxious for, and art is not excluded. Moreover, the succession of eras has been accelerated – as time accelerated, too -, and accordingly every biennial commitment to present the best of the next generation of artists has made novelty a motif, and consequently shortened the novelty of these young artists to the fleeting duration of two short years – the interval separating two biennial art exhibitions.

Authors such as Bruno Latour (2002), Giorgio Agamben (2007), and Boris Groys (2008) have contributed, in more direct or indirect ways, to expand the iconoclast notion in contemporary culture. Also large scale exhibitions of art – such as *Iconoclasm: Beyond the Image-Wars in Science, Religion and Art*, May 2002 (held at Center for New Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany, and curated by Peter Galison, Dario Gamboni, Joseph Leo Koerner, Bruno Latour, Adam Lowe, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Peter Weibel) and *Art under Attack: Histories of British Iconoclasm*¹⁶, from October 2013 to January 2014 (held at Tate Britain, London) - have contextualized iconoclasm beyond religious grounds and so have lent it a more political, philosophical and artistic connotation. This is the kind of stage to which I am interested to bring iconoclasm, and where I intend to sketch a relation with the already problematic idea of artistic research.

Tate Britain exhibition dedicated to *Art under attack* contemplated cases driven by religious, political and aesthetic motivations. Despite my introductory concern with the religious iconoclasm, I will definitely stick from now on to the political implications and to the aesthetic driven examples of this exhibition, as they are of utter relevance for the design of a dualistic notion of artistic research that I am interested to set forth. By doing so I will also be

¹⁶ More info at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/art-under-attack-histories-british-iconoclasm>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

introducing relevant circumstances for development of this reflection on the field of artistic research, as well as my impression on the recent developments and outcomes, and, at last, perchance might derive from them convenient ways of operating within the field.

Besides distinguish between religious, political and aesthetic mobiles of iconoclasm, I would also like to differentiate physical and symbolic manifestations. Image-breaking as a synonym of iconoclasm is not therefore hopelessly attained to violent acts, as it might be presupposed. Also, as I've stressed already, if they are performed by artists, then it is an artistic gesture; if they are prosecuted by 'others' (out of the art world), they are either barbarian violent actions or *naïf* gestures.

I will take this idea of inclusion/exclusion, or us/others, as the figure that roughly sustains the duality of iconoclasm/iconolatry in relation to the practice of artistic research, namely its reflexive dimension. While western world excludes the others through the notion of barbarianism, the art world, for the sake of autonomy, is not what one would call hospitable to commentators, curators, professors, critics, or anyone trying to dialogue, sometimes explain, sometimes describe art, and sometimes just making something verbally taking art as a starting point – sometimes, conversations are regarded as pure acts of iconoclasm against autonomy and aura. Some artists would not stand any of these initiatives for considering the rational endeavor over is but an act of destruction of art's identity. But which identity is that with universalist ambitions?

I am trying to mobilize three things here: i) iconoclasm in Modern art as a productive *avant-garde* strategy, of which I have been talking about mostly, ii) the curator's iconoclastic role (and what I've called *iconoclast aestheticization*), and iii) consequences to artistic research.

i) The Modernist art stretched meaning of iconoclasm stands literally for a series of physical interventions towards works of art, in a set of specific examples that physically acted for the re-construction of images appropriated from other artists (motivated by artistic purposes, so something different from a mere destruction of images, and therefore unlikely to be regarded as vandalism or barbarism). Modern art history and contemporary art are full of episodes that more or less resemble iconoclast attitudes. An early famous example is 1919 Marcel Duchamp's "L.H.O.O.Q" intervention on Mona Lisa (on a reproduction of Mona Lisa, to be more precise). Back in the day the motto was rupturing, pushing Modernist artistic movements in a look for the anew, ultimately matching this novelty with artistic quality guarantee. For that effect, the destruction of the previous was the topic of the day only to bring on unheard elaborations, as asked the logic of vanguards in operation.

This was the procedure for fifty years and more. Other later examples, of a more refined sense of artistic iconoclasm, include Fluxus' "Piano piece #13 (for Nam June Paik)" (1962), by George Maciunas (and recently famously re-enacted by Sonic Youth), where all the keys of a piano are nailed down during the performance; 1953 Robert Rauschenberg's appropriation and erasure of Willem de Kooning's drawing; and, the same year, John Cage's iconic "4'33'". Besides violent acts, and metaphorical destruction, iconoclasm can still be related to a certain absence, as in the examples given of Rauschenberg, of Cage, or also the extreme purism of Malevich (leading from iconoclasm to a new theology) and other monochromes. The content of such images pointed to the absence or their disappearing. Malevitch's "White on white" (1918) is a powerful example of image breaking. It is said to have been hung in an upper level on the wall the first time it was exhibited, teasingly replacing Russian icons that used to take that position. Suprematist and also Constructivist painting that followed have embodied an interesting ambivalence with its monochromatic creations. On the one hand, as in the primary colors triptych of Rodchenko, from 1921, monochromatic works were un-referencing images produced with no other meaning than their own flatness and pure materiality. Painting has thus reached an end in its illusionary autonomist journey, and was so declared dead. On the other hand, and exactly due to the lack of figurative references, space seemed infinite through these small frames of monochromatic views, proposing like a new beginning for the art to come. An iconoclast step was setting up the space for new achievements, through symbolic killing. Both the decision to hang Malevich's painting as an icon and the required competences of contextualization and interpretation - that is, of integration of such act in a broader narrative - are pointing at the curatorial and production competences that artists' started to be required for. After Duchamp's exhibition of the urinal, these new required skills became evidently needed.

I will now report to some of the exhibited works at Tate Britain's *Art under attack* and combine them with the idea of a Modernist iconoclast artistic practice.

The *avant-garde* artistic use of iconoclasm both owes to aesthetics and political motivations. If, in the beginning, what's been assigned to religious iconoclasm could also be perceived as politically committed, due to the existence of non-secularized governments, *avant-garde* also hybridizes its iconoclast sources. In truth, the attempts to separate politics and any social or humanist gesture are always seemingly erroneous. Every action has its political referral, as well as its political consequence. Today's globalized world even more contributes to mix politics and aesthetics, where overthrows of dictators' statues and attacks to emblematic neoliberal symbols have become aesthetic gestures (and they are obviously political). Moreover, political iconoclasm is where is most visible the difference and the demands for change such attacks

encompass. But art also allows for these reactions. Tate Britain's exhibition showed some examples ranging from physical image-breaking to contemporary art idea of creation after destruction. Even those acts involving more physical destruction are therefore artistic gestures, or were not we at the very heart the art world.

Tate Britain's exhibited works of Douglas Gordon are visually very iconoclastic for the similarity of sculpture defacement acts prosecuted in the East. Eyes, entire faces, hands are the most commonly attacked body parts and the first choice for destroyers to apply their force.

Gordon's series "Self-portrait of you + me" is very much showing these eyes and face wrecking. The mirrors the artist places in the holes open by fire in the original image are there to integrate the viewer into the work. For Tate Britain's exhibition, Douglas Gordon had a huge art work of this series whose original image was openly relating to Andy Warhol's portrait of Queen Elizabeth. As the other works of the series, this image was also burnt at parts and given a mirrored image in the holes created.

Other proposals of the exhibition put forth the dialogical relation sometimes artists establish with previously existing works by other artists. These interventions are also taken as forms of commentary, sometimes showing iconoclast impetus. The Chapman brothers were present with a series of interventions, together with other two artists, in portraits depicting Victorian mercantile class they bought in second-hand stores. Jake and Dinos Chapman are most well-known by their infamous re-interpretation of Goya's original drawings on the war, upon which they add cartoon like new faces of clowns, making the scenario even creepier than Goya's original, but risking to be seen as an iconoclast and desecrating act by others.

Kate Davis has presented at that exhibition her series "Disgrace V-VIII", where she "... traced the outline of my own body on to Modigliani's female nude drawings. It is one of several pieces in which I responded to 'canonical' works by significant male artists. I chose art historical moments where the conversation was very male-dominated; I wanted to insert my own voice into that conversation and to rethink those artworks or moments through a feminist lens" (Davis, 2013). Her works are remarkably keen in the set of a conversation with the past by creating something new.

Iconoclasm is then anything but a strict and limiting concept. It is linked to a multitude of dimensions, ways of proceeding, varied intents and materiality. Iconoclast acts can thus be regarded as a creative and a destructive thing at the same time, turning it into a very appealing concept for understanding much religious fanaticism, political revolutionary acts, avant-garde and contemporary art. Through creation or through destruction, it is very much related to transformation and change. The art world bounds with iconoclasm foster this expanded view

and even allow for symbolic and critical cutouts. Boris Groys offers a very important vision on this matter with his curator's iconoclast role.

ii) *Iconoclast aestheticization*

The 2007 Boris Groys' essay *The Curator as Iconoclast* suggests that the practice of curatorship is inescapably linked to a metaphorical image breaking, since the curator's activity originally consists of decontextualizing objects of their original background and insert them in a novel ambience with which they have no bounds. The gallery, as the new context of these objects – in the early days they were mostly religious icons, day-to-day instruments, and professional tools –, de-functionalizes them, and their new function is consequently tied to the act of being observed. Initially designed as objects with a purpose and utility, they have been transformed into objects that passively are, that merely exist, a yet new existence whose meaning is operated by the eyes of the spectator. The new ruling regime where these re-functionalized objects – finally objects of art – are deployed can be called an aesthetic regime.

By suggesting the iconoclast condition to which is condemned the practice of curatorship, Boris Groys is also pointing out an understanding of the resulting aesthetics into which are contextualized the re-functionalized objects in affinity to image breaking.

During Modernism, and as previously said, the iconoclast driving force of 'the next big thing' was driven by the search and care for autonomy of art. In the end it proved to be a suicidal project ultimately accomplished by the 'death of painting', or, alternatively, an eventual failure that transformed the charm of autonomy of art into the production of commodities for the rapacious bourgeoisie. The quest for an absolute autonomy had presumably pushed artists into an autistic journey disconnected from the world, a travel that culminated in a found dystopian reality. Events unfolded before the astonished eyes of Clement Greenberg (1960), whose project claimed that art would conserve immunity to entertainment precisely by demonstrating the uniqueness of its experience as exclusively obtainable through art, in an exercise of refined autonomy.

A very similar route towards dystopia was that of the de-functionalized objects that Groys' figure of the curator 'elevated'¹⁷ to art (2007). The critical notion of artistic *aestheticization* that I want to highlight derives from this gesture of positing non-artistic objects in plinths and frames to transform them into art for the appreciation of the museum visitors. The origins of the curatorial acts date back to the decisions of the revolutionary French government over the

¹⁷ Such term is not in line with the advocated by Boris Groys. In his essay, Groys says that the early curator lowered the previously useful objects to mere objects of art by placing them inside the exhibition space. On the other hand, to artists was reserved the magic powers to elevate mundane objects to artistic works.

objects of the Old Regime. According to Groys, in place of the usual iconoclast wave that swept the previous regime imagery in face of a change, “[t]he French revolutionaries took a different course: instead of destroying sacral and profane objects belonging to the Old Regime they defunctionalized, or, in other words, aestheticized them. The French revolution turned the design of the Old Regime into what we call today art, i.e. in an object not of use but of pure contemplation. This violent, revolutionary act of aestheticization of the old regime created art as we know it today” (Groys, 2014, p. 7). Whereas revolutionary leaders may have been aware of the historical value of the objects, the generality of the Parisians did not show the same concern, and thus perpetrated the acts and reported episodes of iconoclasm – here physical inflicted destruction - in the city, thus engrossing the book *Iconoclasm in revolutionary Paris : the transformation of signs* (2012), by Richard Clay. The importance here lays on the fact that the iconoclast perpetrators acknowledged the power of unofficial iconoclasm to exert influence over government policy, and so used these acts as a weapon of mass destruction and of political opposition. The present-day demonstrations generated in Europe and in the Middle-East, and the international pressures resulting from the episodes of both Charlie Hebdo and earlier the Mohammad caricatures published in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten, have been decisive in diplomatic and also newsroom decisions. The fact that Jyllands-Posten did not republish the caricature first published by Charlie Hebdo made its editor, Flemming Rose, publicly state that the militant Islamists already control newsroom decisions¹⁸. Symbolic iconoclasm can therefore be identified in the basis of Groys’ aesthetic regime of contemporaneity. Directed at the *status quo*, contemporary aesthetical processes tend to do the opposite of design styling. Whereas the last puts over efforts of embellishment of objects, to increase their attractiveness and, consequently, sales – comprising a propensity for production of objects, that is -, contemporary aesthetics aims at image breaking, at the uncovering of dysfunctional aspects of reality, through its representation. Such understanding seems to be in line with Henk Slager’s recent recovery of the importance of aesthetics for the fulfillment of critical artistic research objectives. Slager states that it might be contained in the potential of a renewed aesthetic regime the reframing of artistic research (which he perceives in decay after a long process of academization) (Slager, 2014). The new aesthetic regime established in a context of dematerialization of art is majorly focused in self-reflexivity and in the avoidance of production of instrumentalizing concepts. Therefore, an image of the *status quo* is an image made to perceive it in obsolescence, as a mere passive corpse. The image of

¹⁸ “Do militant Islamists control newsroom decisions, DR2 asked Rose? ‘Yes, it’s true,’ he replied. ‘They already do.’”. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/01/13/the-newspaper-that-first-published-muhammad-cartoons-doesn-t-stand-with-charlie-hebdo.html>. Last access on 03.05.2015.

contemporaneity is, at the same time, its symbolic destruction – the exposition of its dysfunctional aspects and the uncovering of its instrumentalizing concepts. Artistic research experimental processes can only take place in the trail of such *iconoclast aestheticization*. Thereafter, the return to an aesthetic regime in art and its embodiment by artistic research is not a superficially understanding of the fruition and contemplation of objects. It presupposes that a critical and political operation takes shape as an object, as an image or as any dematerialized artwork being produced. As the aesthetic regime breaks with the *status quo*, it can establish relations with iconoclast performances, but always calling on its expanded notion. *Aestheticization* is a process that acts and questions its act, as it gives a sight of reality while criticizes reality, as it breaks an image while producing a new image. The *iconoclast aestheticization* is attained to a reconstruction; it is not about the destruction of image (common sense for iconoclasm), neither the appraisal of it (as could suppose an aesthetic experience). Flourishing perspectives of artistic research are placing it right in the middle of this tension: with eyes turned to artistic production, the performance of artistic research considers the potentiality of a combination of reflexivity and image production, although a production never prompted by the idolatry of art, but rather by the attempt of understanding its processes and of critically engaging in discussions and debates. Such placement of artistic research usually is shaped in hybrid dissertations with a writing and artistic production. Criticism stemming from the consideration that reflexivity and the focus on knowledge cherished by artist researchers is, in itself, iconoclast for it endangers a sacred nature of stand-offish art, might eventually account for the highly creative operation that a profane artistic research portrait might implicate.

Releasing an object from authoritarian impositions, dislocating the intended destruction from the object itself and directing it to the set of rules that determine the way things are perceived, is iconoclasm in a broader less literal sense. Thus revolutionary acts and transformative performances are also iconoclast.

iii) Not always the artists' intentions are crystal clear in the materiality of their works, and sometimes misinterpretation can take place, or very personal understandings may not match the creators' aims. Douglas Gordon work at *Art under attack* could be very easily mistaken with a critique to monarchy, and the Chapman brothers work over Goya's original images could also be taken as a personal attack on the Spanish master. If an artist is willing to make his or her work more understandable, more discussable and open to third person deliberations, then he or she has to engage in public discussion of the work. That is in order to

make possible the latent conversation that most of these works, in one way or another, seem to be more or less concerned with.

A great deal of the work developed in artistic research is that of setting the conditions, the subjects and making the conversation happen. It is in this particular act and desire – of establishing a conversation – that relies the iconoclast sense of artistic research, in opposition to the background iconolater culture of artistic practice. Most of the criticism directed to the activities of artistic research, with origin in the art world, is, more often indirectly than directly, related to this opposition of iconoclasm and iconolatry. Whereas art making deals with the materiality of making meaning, which I will take as image production and, pushing the notion a bit further, icons production, artistic research will be the executioner of artistic endeavors, in the sense its rationalization tendency and communication concerns would distort an original artistic commitment. The skeptics would therefore argue that artist researchers play the iconoclast executioners, since their will of discursivity is killing art schools and art making as doctoral programmes spread away and the educational turn propagates.

The act of conversing is not, in general, coming from the art world. In the art world there's a prevalent taste for the hermetic, the exclusive, the gift and the genius. Camiel van Winkel's "sandwich" (2013) has referred to that. Artists sticking to the autonomy of art will most certainly impeach conversers and charge them of iconoclast behavior. Not a creative iconoclasm, but one that is most retained in images of ruin and wreckage, one that the most extreme would say is born out of an utter dislike or incapacity to deal with visuals. Dispose and expose art and so relativize it, is thus regarded as iconoclast gesture. The iconoclast undertakers are *par excellence*, curators and researchers.

Opposing iconoclasts are the iconolaters. The gatekeepers of the territory of art are the iconolaters, and part of their commitment of nurturing the yearned autonomy is to refuse the possible conversations and any sort of relativization of art. In that sense, no action involving art waged by anyone who is not an artist is welcomed nor tolerated. Every effort to put the art world in contact with the mundane – to curate an exhibition, to write an article, to organize a symposium – is so to be endangering art's self-evidence and idiosyncrasy – and geniality. Since Marcel Duchamp elevated a urinal to the status of art object, it became explicit that artists own these magical powers of determining what art is and what it is not. The touch of their fingers is not turning metal into gold, but, still, it is transforming the mundane into something higher-minded¹⁹. Any non-artist imitating the exact same procedures of Duchamp

¹⁹ In turn it sometimes seems like the research is transforming gold into metal, as he or she dares to approach art making, at least from the point of view of skeptics and opponents to the educational and research wave in the artistic practice.

with a urinal, a bicycle wheel or a bottle holder would end with a urinal, a bicycle wheel and a bottle holder, neither more nor less.

According to Boris Groys, the beginning of curatorship was prompted by sharing similar powers, with curators having the ability to turn objects into art. That was, however, in opposite directions of that all magical way of doing things artists acted. Both turned common objects into art, but whereas artists elevated mere mundane objects to the category of art, curators lowered functioning tools to the useless category of art. The curator could, back when art museums appeared through the nineteenth century, select artifacts with functional roles in the day-to-day activities of non-European cultures. The first museums hosted eclectic collections of strange objects, some quite bizarre, and most of them with usage as ritual objects and godlike artifacts of these exotic cultures. The power of the curator was to de-functionalize these objects collected at pillage and imperial conquest, and thus to turn them into art to be admired. By removing these objects from their ritual tasks, the curator is acting as an iconoclast. And this is to what his or her activity is permanently condemned to, according to Boris Groys (2007).

The same can be inferred on the criticism towards the field of artistic research. For criticism in this case I do not necessarily mean an open debate towards the agenda of artistic research, but, more particularly, other denotations, in which I include the hard relationship with writing and reading routines and the conscious option of boycotting dialogue and possible conversations intended by artist researchers. At the basis of this criticism is the commitment to secure art's autonomy.

Having in mind art's zealous attitude, every use given to images as part of narratives, illustrations or other contexts – that is what curators do - will be clashing with their self-evidence and autonomous statuses, and thus will be eligible for iconoclast attitudes. Even in the cases where a triumph of the image is the topic addressed in an article, or the discussion in a seminar. And the same goes with any attempt to produce a critical text, an exhibition review, a book about art, any initiative of developing further complex thinking about certain topics, construct a dissertation on an outstanding aspect, become a Doctor of Art or a Doctor of Fine Arts. Every example given is relativizing images and goes against the premises of the early Modernist art that, seemingly last to the present-day. Every kind of artist-researcher is, according to iconolaters, in itself a contradiction that finds its solution in the also conflicting notion of artist as iconoclast.

And there is no chance that the practice of artistic research becomes discreet or becomes invisible. It is the same for curators: an act of presentation that presents itself. By assuming its presence, research is released from its art imprisonment. It still is intimately (and perhaps

ontologically) connected to art practice; however that connection is not a subaltern one. Artistic research openly deals with discursivity and translation²⁰ of artworks and artistic processes, not in the sense of disempowering audiences, but aiming to increase artistic potential and to create something else of its own right out of the alleged image breaking. There actually is a creative dimension about artistic research. This creative dimension is only possibly connected to iconoclasm in the sense that the creation may destroy the order of things, or the way we perceive things proposed by authoritarian standards. If, at times, authority comes from a too hermetic art world, which gains more from the lack of communicability than from promotion of dialogue, then, yes, artistic research acts as the image-breaker.

The iconoclast sense of artistic research, described by an artist researcher, could be emphasized as such: a way made explicit to struggle against art-as-religion. It is, therefore, an expression of art-atheism. In this sense, yes, it is iconoclast.

The cherished artistic autonomy has definitely to be revised. It is simply not possible for the work to reach the viewer; it is the viewer who has to reach the work. It has to be exhibited – and there is a variety of ways it can happen - in order to make possible the idealized meeting: one that has to be prepared, but should not be manipulated; one that disconnects that moment from reality and leaves only object and spectator in the world. For a reason ‘curator’ is a word deriving from ‘cure’, and Boris Groys states this has precisely to do with the “unhealthy” natural state of art, unable to find a viewer by itself, and claiming for help, or a cure (2007).

So how come curators and researchers are iconoclasts if iconoclasm is what iconolatry seems to be dependent of?

It is worth mention that the communicability to which artistic research stands for is not one with simplicity and flatness on its horizon. In fact, the creation of narratives into which is committed artistic research is rather interested in complex reality(ies) than in flat descriptions. The translation it proposes to do isn’t that of saying the same thing through other equivalent words, supposedly words that make it more understandable. Sticking to Walter Benjamin (1923) and Jean-Luc Nancy (1993), the translation operated by artistic research is about importing the same mechanisms used in art to tell things in a research-like language. It is easy to see that this will outcome a novel result. And this opens up a field which is not comprised neither in an empirical understanding of research, or in the research that artists have always done while making art.

²⁰ Translation in a complex sense, influenced by Walter Benjamin’s theory of translation of *The task of the translator* (1923). In the chapter “WRITING” I will deepen this aspect of artistic research.

For sure that art's autonomy isn't something being questioned only recently, with the research advent. There are few past examples which can be understood through this lens as sensing an amount of that problematic conviction of autonomy, and they are very much linked to absence or, more accurately, to the presence of absence. Monochromatic paintings – again Malevich's "White on white" – embody this contradiction between infinity and flat object, or between artwork and its clamant absence. Also the erased drawing of de Kooning, by Robert Rauschenberg, and John Cage's iconic "4'33'", both dating from the 50s, are living out from the presence of an absence, which is to say an absence that made presence heavier than ever. As in the case of a robbed museum, which opts to leave the frames where once were the robbed works of art. Even though the original paintings are not there, their absence has made them present – perhaps more than ever. Was "View of the sea at Scheveningen" of Vincent van Gogh known before it was robbed from the museum in Amsterdam?

The conclusion is that art is not an entity that inhabits, that actually incarnates the materials in each of the objects of art, and thus dies as they die – or disappear. All the upper exemplifying acts, from monochromes to museum robbery, make their commentary aloud to the claiming realization that those objects are not imbued with art's presence, as well as an art work that is signed is not meaning that it is inhabited by artist's divine presence. It is a mere reference that refers to a constructed idea of art. This has been brought by René Magritte when he decided to tell that the pipe he painted was not a pipe, but a reference to all pipes that viewers knew and carried on their minds. After his 1929 "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (in truth named "La trahison des images") art became a reference to something that is missing, to something that is absent. It is not a coincidence that the 60s devoted to documentation, and to a certain intellectualization, as ways to refer to art, as media to signify art. By engaging in complex narratives, artistic research seeks to dig in possible relations between objects and references, denying their status of 'incarnating' art in themselves, but instead being signifiers of art. In that sense, they are objects which can be freely manipulated in order to create meaning and without risking to harm any sort of sacred territory.

The artist researcher is the secularized artist. The artist-researcher is an artist that lost his or her aura because he became aware of the unbearable sacredness that art was still engaging with. At the University of Music and Performing Arts of Graz (KUG), Austria, there is a talk of a certain "... anxiety about the demystification of art and the damage to the romantic idea of the artistic genius", and so determines that it is "the university's task to work to enlighten people

and to create an environment that is supportive of EEK²¹. Our advisory board for EEK, our doctoral schools, and our readiness to help with relevant research proposals provide plenty of space for discussion of the methodology of art as a research approach, instead of only discussing the artistic results, as was the case previously” (Schulz & Höldrich, 2011, p. 227).

The artist-researcher still holds the power to turn banal objects into art, and use artworks for art's sake, although profanation of art, testing its limits, hybridization, collaboration, networking, documentation, presentation and public discussion have become the artistic research agenda.

The curator cannot create art himself; the artist researcher can, because he is both: a researcher and an artist.

The argument developed here is not willing to support a research *modus operandi* in the place of artistic idiosyncratic methods, as it may sound at times. Its intention is to understand why artists seem rather shut in what concerns possibilities for the unsettlement of some art's particularities, possibilities for its own rethought, and challenging connections that might lead into the unknown. Autonomy is then the evasion used for refusal or the veiled excuse to turn a deaf ear on research. Iconoclasm is then the name used to biasedly portray the situation in question, for it attempts to put research-driven initiatives out of play by arguing their disaffection for images.

As a remark I must say that, however, I have not come to a single report or interview where that relationship was established and the “iconoclast” term applied to artistic research. When I refer to skepticism claiming that artistic research is an iconoclast act, I mean not necessarily the literal use of the term, but a reference to the iconoclast attitude with different names. Nevertheless I found that the iconoclasm's complex network of references and metamorphosis through history could provide a resourceful set for my pursuit of the many-sided portrayal of artistic research.

It was my intention to highlight the phenomenon of artistic research in this dualistic way, both as iconoclasm and as iconolatry. The dualistic perspective presented is different from a binary perspective, since the dualistic one supposes that the two ways, iconoclasm and iconolatry, even if opposing views, are both necessary to an intended dynamics. The potential of artistic research, as I've been portraying it, certainly benefits from the unachieved democracy, the unachieved communality, and the unachieved unanimity on its possible meanings, conscious that these would possibly imply an unwanted crystallization. By maintaining a status of

²¹ EEK means “Entwicklung und Erschließung der Künste”, which in English turns to “advancement and appreciation of the arts”. It is used as an equivalent to ‘artistic research’: “In the Austrian context, the terms ‘artistic research’ and ‘advancement and appreciation of the arts’ are largely taken to be synonymous” (Schulz & Höldrich, 2011, p. 226).

conflicting consensus, it is assured in advance that its activities will hardly be commodified and stultified as a consequence.

As I tried to demonstrate, iconoclasm is not a compact neither static notion; it is very open and plastic, making its exploration a never-ending operation of finding new examples in history of art and new perspectives to look at it in the present time. The very up-to-date case of “Je suis Charlie” is sort of embodying this contradictory ontology of iconoclasm. At the same time it leavens the art autonomy vs artistic research embroilment with a novel expectation. “If we understand ‘Je suis Charlie’ as an iconic reaction”, someone in the audience of *Unfixing Images* held in March at KABK said, “then we have to regard it as victory of the iconoclast. It is three words replacing an image”. In my turn I would rather stand for the three words ‘becoming’ an image, rather than replacing one. This, instead of throwing art and society into a hopeless scenario of signifiers, would be highlighting the blend of text and image, of writing and making, of theory and practice, as potentiality.

*

The term *iconoclast aestheticization* that I have adopted previously in this section is almost a pleonasm. Both *iconoclasm* and *aestheticization*, in the ways I’ve chosen to apply them, embody dualities whose axis is the outcome of art making – as language flows, generally synonymized with the production of images. *Aestheticization*, as the predicate of a twenty-first century aesthetic regime, blends the production of images with the destruction of the content of those images. It means that the moment a certain object is pictured, it is because it already destroyed, and turning all representations into looks in retrospect. The destruction that the term refers to is a critical performativity contained in the act of *aestheticization*.

At the same time, the notion of *iconoclasm* also comprises the symbolic destruction of images, and the production of new images upon the wreckage left by the first ones. It contains a productive effect that I am interested to relate to artistic research. I’ve brought both to this text to be used as conceptual tools.

The initial impetus in developing the present study that I’ve rooted in the personal detection of a conflicting environment between image idolatry and image breaking (or, more straightforwardly, between artist-artists and artist-theoreticians, not to leave irony aside) established in my graduation context, has been growing the division between those who practice art and those who carry out reflexive endeavours on theirs and their peers’ practices. As a doctoral student in such dichotomist environment, I always felt like carrying the iconoclast epithet – in other words though - for presumably standing for the appraisal of textual language over image making.

I've decided to apply *iconoclasm* and *aestheticization* as a combo so to stress their individual and collective dualities, to foster the tension I want to bring to the forefront of their use in the context of artistic research. From my observations in the particular contexts of artistic research in Helsinki and in The Hague, I guess very appropriate to highlight and also to preserve the tension in which artistic research is placed in the current days. Contrary to what Henk Slager announces in the opening lines of the editorial of *Experimental Aesthetics* issue of Metropolis M – “Today, both the practice and understanding of artistic research are encompassed by increasingly rigidifying forms of academization. This asks for a thorough conceptual reassessment of that originally artistic field. ... Does the present conceptual impact of artistic research still cover its original and radical drive? Is artistic research still related to processes of experimental thinking and creating? Or does a pervasive institutionalization urge to reset the ever-narrowing framework of artistic research?” (Slager, 2014, p. 2) – I argue that the performativity of *iconoclast aestheticization*, assured by the tensional stage in which it occurs, refrains academization of becoming a nullifying pervasion, and simultaneously it explores possibilities grounded in the combination of reflexivity and art making usually bypassed by artist-artists.

From autonomy to *new materialism* or how we moved from *experientiality* to *experimentalism*

It is often the case that artistic participatory projects raise affection among the public. Additionally they're also into the good graces of curators and critics who are not grumbling anymore 'relational aesthetics'. Nicolas Bourriaud's eponymous book (1998) caused quite a stir among theoreticians, and its ideas, generally presented in a light and haphazard manner, led to the proliferation of shallow takes in the 90s and early 2000s²². Anyway, a participatory environment, for its foundational intents, suggests a crusade for a lost or menaced humanity whatsoever. Humans are always more humans when they relate to other humans, and cultivate, and show their humanity to other humans. There is an underlying sense of community that joins the friendliness and agreement met by the huge majority towards participatory and relational proposals, and it is precisely the unanimity and uncritical positive perception these generate that places them in dangerous terrains, overly exposed. Not that I stand in the side of devil's advocate, but in face of an amount of questionable results, it seems important to revise certain notions that are usually automatically well-accepted. I am not only

²² 1993 Lyon Biennale, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud with the motto “L'expérience de la durée”, was run under his relational aesthetics ideas. This biennale is often associated with a praise for interactivity, for the sake of interactivity, put to work in fashionable way rather than with the critical aspiration that is expected to be found in an artistic event. As a consequence, the results became targets of critique. My impression is that ever since 'relational aesthetics' became spotted and unbearable for many art thinkers.

retaining the numberless projects of arts education centered in the individual's inter-subjectivity, in interactivity and communal activities. These are manifold and too often clog every public event dedicated to artistic research methodologies, art and community, and education through art, to the extent that they have been responsible for a lately dubious labeling of arts education among artists and scholar thinkers. But that is a different story altogether, in which psychologization of art and social operation of control play fundamental roles. What matters here is that I am referring to the positive acceptance of participatory projects taking place in the artistic sphere, and also in society in general. The sense of togetherness of contemporary society, or the alarming paucity of togetherness announced by the so-called social scientists and psychologists, has made it too likely to be intercepted by the mechanisms of bio-power²³ (Foucault, 1976). No one excuses noticing the tremendous social pressure of getting together, from latent prejudice against celibate, the marriage affair, urban spaces conceived for social life and an alarming preoccupation with the issues aroused by migration from peripheral regions to the main cities, so that the newcomers will get connected to facilities and neighbourhood. Technology advertisement directs the spotlight to promises of connectivity²⁴ and at the same time brings into conversation the division between sociability and loneliness as perpetrated by physical encounters and screened relationships. Loneliness has been treated from several points of study, from psychology to fashion, from urbanism to art. Painter Edward Hopper portrayed it in *Nighthawks* (1942): "Nighthawks shows four people in a diner at night, cut off from the street outside by a curving glass window: a disquieting scene of disconnection and estrangement. In his art, Hopper was centrally concerned with how humans were handling the environment of the electric city: the way it crowded people together while enclosing them in increasingly small and exposing cells. His paintings establish an architecture of loneliness, reproducing the confining units of office blocks and studio apartments, in which unwitting exhibitionists reveal their private lives in cinematic stills, framed by panes of glass" (Laing, 2015). Commissioned public art has also developed a complicity with urban planning, becoming partially a strategy of citizenship to emotionally connect people. And it usually is very successful in using premises of spectacle to target people's emotions and attraction – realization of mural painting events and graffiti designated areas illustrate this point; Portuguese artist Vhils is also an exemplary case of how spectacle works to induce people's sympathy for art making.

²³ It concerns the set of regulatory practices of Modern State towards the regulation of their subjects and the behaviour of their bodies. Such practices are usually related to public health, but not exclusively.

²⁴ Nokia's slogan: "connecting people".

Local governing entities are aware that 'placemaking' (McAuliffe, 2013)²⁵ plays an important role in connecting people to places, both from human and economic points of view. A rhetoric joining urbanity, placemaking and humanity has high seductive chances, especially if directed at micro-levels, since these are kept away from the larger commercial and architectonic projects still associated with the prejudice of the installed real estate and economic crisis. Humanity stands together with sociability, without which the first is less – the odd looks towards celibacy, hermit's lifestyle, or the psychotic Hitchcock's Norman Bates (1960), all reinforce the bound between a rich social life and being a healthy and happy human being. Are our mediated relationships through internet still human relationships? The concerns with decreasing of connectedness among human beings, so understood the decreasing of their humanity, is a topic of this post-modern era. Also, the appropriation of the idea of humanity, the subjectivities it encompasses, and their sequent instrumentalization, have been of enormous usability to the post-fordist society.

Medical-informed current overviews state that people are disconnected to each other. It is not a matter of geography, since low-cost flight companies have sprout in the last decade and travelling has slowly been trivialized. More and more people have nomadic lifestyles and are considered 'world citizens', transcending any possibly narrowing locality. The problem, they say, is that we are close to those who are distant, and distant to those who are close.

Disconnectedness is perceived and diagnosed, and simultaneous urban, medical, political strategies are at stake to remedy it.

It is also tempting to understand relational and participatory practices of contemporary art as fetches to reconnect people, artists with the world, artists with artists, artists with audience and audience with the world - in an increasing disconnected society. Similar worries were already sensed by Conceptual artists, who have justified part of their cheap, portable, easy to do and sped up media, with their felt necessity of getting the message out to the public, not only quicker but also independently of installed ruling structures of museums and art critics. This is how artist Seth Siegelaub has based his found potential in publishing, as marginal and efficient artworks and ways of conveying artworks. Catherine de Zegher and Gerald McMaster, curators of the 18th Sidney Biennial, agree with the diagnostic: "In the arts, as elsewhere, analytical reflection has led to an understanding that human beings are highly dependent upon our often overlooked relationships with others and with our common world. While this connective model is still embedded in a few societies, established western cultural patterns

²⁵ "Placemaking is a philosophy, originated in the 1960s when journalists like Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte created the idea that cities need to cater for people, rather than catering for cars and shopping centres. Put simply, placemaking is about connecting people to place". More info at <http://www.triplepundit.com/2013/10/urban-landscapes-art-bringing-together/>. Last accessed on 22.06.2015.

have tended to emphasize the fragmentation and isolation of the individual” (Zagher & McMaster, 2012). In an artistic context, the disconnectedness inheritance is regarded as owed to Modernist rupturing strategy that favoured separation. A supposedly new era, that followed the deaf autonomy Modernist artists sought after, emerged in concernment to fix broken bounds, thus interested in connectivity among people and situations. Therefore, 2012 de Zagher and McMaster’s event was thought in line with the overcoming of the previous separation and the endorsing of connective artistic practices with symptomatic social changes already set in the world: “With the creation of conditions for an encounter in consonance with our surrounding world, this event will bring emphasis to what is already happening at large” (Zagher & McMaster, 2012). Spectatorship in the form of reception of works of art, and publicness in the sense of distribution of artistic practices, have been since some years now topical issues in the agenda of contemporary art thinkers. Summarizing this, a new paradigm in the art has been pointed out in terms of connectivity between people and between people and society at large, reacting against a previously rupturing Modernist avant-gardism. Concerns with the relational have informed following artistic projects, through participatory and collaborative practices, and theorization and debates have taken upon the understanding and the promotion of such connectivity. The concern with re-connectivity cannot be isolated in the artistic realm; it is decisively shaped by social and political circumstances.

The questionable aspect of the presented setting of disconnection-reconnection turns up in the way it has been introduced, first as a Modernist aggravation, and after as a shift to a contemporary era that works-out a resolution. In other words, artistic developments have reached the point where *avant-garde* as a rupture-after-rupture movement has been denied for the disconnectedness its dynamics generated. Denial was envisaged in the arrival of a new stage of reconnection between previously split or removed parts such as individuals with individuals, individuals with spaces, art with public.

But how come a promise of stability is again informed by a new discontinuity? ‘The next big thing’ has again taken over the presumably counteract, and learnt to penetrate the logic that was being rehearsed. Even in contemporaneity, art and life aims at the next new thing.

The difference, it seems, derives from the realization that originality has been relativized as changing engine. Since structuralists declared that there is nothing beyond text, nothing surpassing language as our limited possibilities of thinking the new - especially Jacques Derrida’s stance that there is no outside of text -, that originality has been perceived in sequence of previous events. It means that no real disruption takes place to the point of denying completely a past. To this sense, Clement Greenberg made a point by suggesting that

art might be a continuum – although questionable directed to the goal of total autonomy (1939, 1960).

Ruptures lose a great deal of revolutionary spirit with this in mind. It seems more adequate to schematize that we are in a continuity of historical, political, social and cultural events, constantly rearranging the pieces and the actors of the plot. Not a continuum with a pre-established direction, as was the case of progressive views, but a continuum in a space of scattered elements.

This understanding of the reached stability of reconnection, not as the promised stability – as if it was the case of a promised land - achieved upon the arrival of the new era, but as reconfiguration conducted by the circumstances of post-structuralism, is also the reason why we, in the present, speak of *experimentalism* instead of new shifts. Even though we might feel stuck in *experimentalism*, sometimes even extremely limited for the continuum such idea entails, we no longer look for giant shifts. The situation resembles more that of a *cul-de-sac* where imagination is imprisoned: “The crisis of imagination is not brought about so much by the lack of potential to produce alternatives (because everything seems to be possible, at least in the eyes of capital exchange) as by the evidence that one’s alternatives have no capacity to shift the sensed contemporary. There seems to be a hegemonic voracity regarding the present, a manifestation of the desire to normalize subjectivity by controlling the mechanisms inherent to political mobilization... and subjective perceptions” (Alves, 2014, p.4). Supported by Nicolas Bourriaud’s *The Radicant* (2009), Andre Alves adds that “If one lives under a sensation of inoperability, of ‘no alternatives left’, then, in the world of unlimited reproduction – as Nicolas Bourriaud puts it – subjects are left to live under the sign of permanent exile” (Alves, 2014, p. 4).

Contemporary rhythms have not armed us with sufficiently accurate tools or the right frames to analyze events in the globalized era. Everything happens too fast in the experimental regime – experiments succeed, and a focus in a particular aspect inevitably lets escape a huge amount of other aspects that cannot be apprehended with a selective gaze. Images produced in these circumstances are therefore playing the *aestheticization* of its content: the numberless biennials only rarely propose experiments of interest out of the *cul-de-sac*, and also the manic neoliberal-prompted research impetus are two good examples of attempts of capturing a reality that in turn act as their de-functionalization. How did we get here?

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Participatory practices in art have received a new breath in the late third of the twentieth-century. They appear in the debouching of a long course of artistic developments bridging the

Second World War failure of the Modern project to the turn of the century. Looking at Conceptual art seems a good starting point, as these artists' critical positioning against controlling categories has, to a large extent, set the course of their revolutionary practices. Their contestation of institutional powers, individuality and art-as-commodity is well patented in their taste for duchampian-claiming and appropriation, for art-as-life works, and for their collective engagement in collaborative projects of shared authorship.

In the late sixties, these conceptualists looked for escapes to move away from Minimalist art, whose tonic on material appeared antagonist to those who looked to ideas as the paramount of art. According to this view, a great deal of Minimalism can be perceived as an extreme sharpening of the formal purity advocated by Greenberg (1939) and his artist followers. A purity that ultimately led to cultural confinement, a close down not fitting the social convulsions going on, but to which object status has become the ensign. In a way, it mirrored a dark side of autonomy, which deliberately opted for isolation instead of bounding with the world. The 'death of painting' summed up the confinement, and in face of it Minimalism has purposely opted to contain the excesses of Pop art into boredom – or, alternatively, into a "sharpening of formal purity", as I said before.

In turn, Conceptualists were keen on the call of counter-culture that would relieve them from the frame-and-plinth dictatorship. Shaped by the political times surrounding them – in the United States unfolded the opposition to Vietnam war, consequent social turmoil, and civil rights explosion with according public demonstrations -, which constitutes an aspect already contrasting with the previous autonomy quest, these artists engaged in an active de-commodification of art led by two aligned purposes that can be briefly formulated as: i) the questioning of boundaries that formed systems, and ii) the impugnement of established art rules, namely those that fed consumerism and a pre-neoliberal government. Dematerialization of art functioned in both directions, as it challenged the logics operating and, by falling into the unknown, came up with things that allowed experimenting with the borders, at least for a while.

An exhibition curated by Lucy Lippard in 1969 and held at Paula Cooper Gallery attested the conceptual dematerialization with works of some of the movement leaders 'filling' an almost empty room: "Haacke's 'Air Currents' (a small fan), Barry's invisible 'Magnetic Field', Weiner's 'Minute Pit in The Wall From One Air-Rifle Shot', Wilson's 'Oral Communication', a 'secret' by Kaltenbach, a small black blip painted on the wall by Richard Artschwager, Huot's 'existing shadows', and a tiny cable wire piece by Andre on the floor" (Lippard, 1997, p. xx). At the same time, this exhibition contained the flip side of dematerialization of art objects, which has been revealed in the increasing levels of production of documentation: "The smallest room

was, by contrast, crammed with printed matter - photo, text, xerox, and otherwise shrunken art" (Lippard, 1997, p. xx). Such contraposition was foreshadowing and has ultimately given rise to the emergence of a *new materialism* of language and text, post-conceptual, which populates the present phenomenon of artistic research²⁶. This *new materialism*, as a return of materiality after dematerialization in art, will become the image of a forming inquiring aesthetic regime apparently stuck with an experimentalism largely owing to the following conceptual devices: art-as-life, post-structural language, and publishing formats. With the developments of artistic research, publishing has been transformed into a new *cul-de-sac* – “stuck with experimentalism”, but still an impasse – responsible for *productivism*²⁷, as I will argue later. Previously regarded by Conceptualists in general, and by Seth Siegelaub in particular, as a promising alternative art making, the sometimes not so clear distinction between publishing as artistic practice, and publishing as documentation of artistic practice, has seemingly compromised the potential of such practice. Also the fact that dematerialized art relied grossly in documentation has contributed to the growth of the mentioned materiality as published objects.

It is not without irony that the critique finds out that the attempts to understand and experiment with the Conceptual artists’ struggle against commodification of art, that drove the narrative of dematerialization of art, has eventually resulted in more materialism, and, consequently, in a new commodity for the present-day economic system of the knowledge society. The challenge that the situation ascribes to artistic research is how to publish without being trapped in a commodity production system – into which has been transformed the contemporary university, one deduces from Bill Readings’ *University in Ruins* (1996). Also in this case, *iconoclast aestheticization* has been inverted: the absence of image has been broken to create an image/materiality (about the previous absence). Answering Agamben’s inquiry, contemporaneity has turned the profanation of an image in a new image whatsoever.

But back to history and to the art world.

Publishing as an art form received an inspiring whiff with the pursuit of alternative forms to the established art circuit of Conceptual artists. To this respect, Seth Siegelaub was very active. He saw in self and rapidly published artists’ books a new instance for art, instead of merely a channel to document artistic events and statements – as it was the case of sponsored catalogues of the artistic circuit embedded exhibitions. This would later become a workable

²⁶ I am opting to refer to artistic research as a phenomenon because it expands the meaning of discipline and, at the same time, it avoids the evangelic tone of paradigm.

²⁷ I found this notion in the book edited for the project A.C.A.D.E.M.Y. in 2006, published by Revolver. I will go back to it later.

territory for the encounter of art and design, and also the object of attention of much twenty-first century artistic research²⁸.

Performance and happenings, first time arising as artistic *media*, followed the same logic of detachment from the saleable materialism into which has culminated Minimalism, Pop and previous sculpture and painting. After all, being these ephemeral actions they could not be hung on a wall neither posited upon a plinth, could they? Maybe not, although it did not take too long until museums and collectors found ways to acquire these objects of art as they did with all the previous others. Such ways were sensed already in the smaller fulfilled room of aforementioned Lippard's exhibition at the Paula Cooper Gallery, in 1969. The occasion of performative art carried with it the Conceptual emphasis on the ephemeral, of art as process, as an event incorporating everyday practices and everyday life into it, as it was visibly patent in Vito Acconci's works of the time, and in Gilbert & George's living sculptures. Besides these examples, in her book *Six years: the dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (1973), Lucy Lippard points out 1971 Christopher Cook's "... grand-scale 'art-as-life' work by assuming the directorship of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston as a year-long piece" (Lippard, 1997, p. xvi) where the artist insistently tried to obliterate boundaries between art and life²⁹. I chose to highlight Cook's endeavor, sufficiently odd in itself for its time – even for Conceptual institutional critique it blurred the line in a not very clear way – because it is certainly a very inspiring example for the recent and current artistic practices carried out by *e-flux*, by its members, and also showing in some of the works commissioned for biennials in the last years, all encompassed by the notion of *educational turn*³⁰ coined by Mick Wilson and Paul O'Neill in a conference called "You Talkin' to me? Why Art is Turning to Education" happened in London in 2008 (which served the publication in 2010 of *Curating and the educational turn*)

²⁸ Graphic diaries and artists' books are widespread topics in postgraduate arts education. My Master thesis reflected on notions of 'care of the self', borrowed from Michel Foucault, and the usage of graphic diaries, which I preferred to call visual diaries, by pupils at school. At PhDArts programme in The Hague, Delphine Bedel's research is largely placed upon the issue of publishing of artists' books, especially in a dematerialized web context.

²⁹ Cook's art piece ended with a final exhibition "... where his office was recreated; videotaped and photographic documentation of his activities over the past year were displayed along with various papers, notes and, artifacts. People attending the show participated in the yearlong artistic project and were invited to continue the process of integrating art and life in their own experience" (McNiff, 2004, p. 165).

³⁰ A notion proposed by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, as "a new discursive object that encapsulates the increasing presence of the pedagogical in art exhibitions and that acknowledges that the terminology of "school" and "academy" has become increasingly significant in discussions of contemporary art" (Tom Holert, 2010).

The term educational turn is about developments in contemporary art and theory that have been taking place since the end of the twentieth century, and that introduced in artistic practices and curatorship notions of education in the form of pedagogical methods, temporary alternative schools, knowledge production and its sharing. The emphasis of the educational turn is therefore put in situations created along the exhibitions or in the approach to aspects of the exhibitions that can embody these educational notions. Instead of focusing on the artwork and art-making, the educational turn is more attained to the production and problematization of discursivity. *Educational turn* is also rooted in critical pedagogy theories committed with the development of anti-hegemonic pedagogical methods aiming at counteracting dominant powers, cultural authority and bureaucratic systems. It is in the context of critical pedagogy and their exploration in the art field through the framework of educational turn that some formal innovations occurred, like the occupation of spaces unrelated and outside the white cube, for instance the public space, libraries and schools, as well as the adoption of collective acts such as participatory practices and collaborations induced by the promotion of self-organization and dialogues between audiences, public and artists.

(Madoff, 2006; Nollert et al, 2006; Wilson, 2007; Rogoff, 2008; Allen, 2011). Such tendency has been the backdrop at the transformation of Manifesta 6 into an art school, or the theoretical ground that originated the several educational events accompanying artistic exhibitions in the form of forums, publications or alternative art schools. We have the chance to visit in 2015q the first Research Pavilion in Venice Biennale, and it certainly owes as much to the *educational turn* as it is informed – and informs – the phenomenon of artistic research³¹. In any event the two share interconnected ideas, although they also have a fundamentally principle difference: whereas *educational turn* encloses work of mostly theoreticians, artistic research has been since recent years establishing itself in the artistic field, either encouraging artists to conduct the field, and focusing attention in artistic outcomes, rather than in theoretical abstract productions and the application of critical pedagogy the artistic territories.

Most of the examples of art works given until now and the posted advances are embodying Conceptual artists' attempt at counteract art-as-commodity, by impugning and confusing the rules of the established artistic system (ii). For the institutional boundaries I have indicated in a first thread (i), it is largely intimately related with the second (ii) and building up on *institutional critique*, and particularly in acute works approaching the exhibition space by, for instance, Hans Haacke (and particularly his 1993 Germania for the 45th Venice Biennale). Dada-inspired appropriation was a shared strategy developed in Conceptual art that equally trended the institutional and non-institutional space division: "N. E. Thing Co categorized its work as ACT (Aesthetically Claimed Things) or ART (Aesthetically Rejected Things); Robert Huot, Marjorie Strider, and Stephen Kaltenbach all did pieces that 'selected' art-like objects from real life in the city" (Lippard, 1997, p. ix). This appropriation mechanics, also owing to Duchamp as an inspiring figure, regarded public domain as the scenario of a relational exchanging game of information and systems, ultimately criticized by appropriations in a political sense, since they were conducted purposely oblivious of institutional powers. Also, the ways some of those appropriation artworks were being conducted by artists promoted collaborative practices, since they included consented utilizations of fellow artists' images or words in the works of others. It was part of a strategy against individuality and in line with the collective practices of the sixties.

Conceptual artists were well connected among themselves. They were a closely-knit group, and despite their differences in how to put in practice their ideas, a common willingness of breaking institutional rules and systems underwent the varied approaches. Adding to an awareness of the works of their other fellows, to which usually contributed, they were also

³¹ I wrote about this Research Pavilion later in the text.

familiar with works of other artists in different parts of the world. In her book Lucy Lippard tells episodes of artists she came across that lived outside of New York and whose work was influential on a personal level, but also to the movement that was generally going on.

In a 1969 Seth Siegelaub said that: "Communication relates to art three ways: (1) Artists knowing what other artists are doing. (2) The art community knowing what artists are doing. (3) The world knowing what artists are doing" (as quoted in Lippard, 1997, p. xvii).

Unobstructed links and the good relations among these artists assured that numbers one and two were accomplished, as collaborative works and mutually-agreed appropriations were the dish of the day in late 60s and 70s. Siegelaub's third subheading, however, was a total different story – one that finds very similar parallel in today's art produced under the *educational turn* push. One of the most devastating critiques – and perhaps the most thoughtful - directed at the work developed under the umbrella concept of artistic research is one accounting it is closed in on itself and of little interest to practicing artists that work outside the academic sphere³². This, in fact, is perhaps the bigger handicap in the actual effects that artistic research wishes for itself, since it is built in the presupposition of having an impact in the social dimension of art practice. However, as I've been seeing it, the tendency is changing. Since the second half of the 2000s that the realization that the artistic field was not being the privileged focus of attention of the discursivity produced by artistic research, that the field has redefined itself. Artistic research's command was delivered to artist researchers, and not alienated theoreticians, and new audacious study programmes were organized that gave the responsibility of the developments of the field to the ones actually working on it: these students and the staff members, eventually foretoking the formation of a community of artist researchers. In similar lines, Conceptual artists experimented a good sense of community among themselves, but their communication did not reach the public sphere in ways that matched their intents. Lippard commented it accurately: "Communication (but not community) and distribution (but not accessibility) were inherent in Conceptual art. Although the forms pointed toward democratic outreach, the content did not. However rebellious the escape attempts, most of the work remained art-referential, and neither economic nor esthetic ties to the art world were fully severed (though at times we liked to think they were

³² I have experienced that myself, when, as a researcher, I organized a seminar dedicated to the debate of artistic research. One of the refusals, after an invitation I directed at an artist/teacher/researcher for lecturing, was a commentary that what I was proposing to organize was found uninteresting inboard artistic circles, and that artistic research, as a field, was not taken seriously in the circle, except for the damage it could cause to an art school – again, in the eyes and voice of the refusing invitee. This critique was multilayered, and accompanied me for a long time, informing my own research. It obviously separated artistic research from the artistic field, in a biased manner, and deductively placed me outside of the artistic circle – here aprioristically presented as a place where everybody wants to be in. The critique summoned diverse aspects that made me realize that an analysis of the field of artistic research could only be an interesting and useful contribution if aware of the complex network it is inserted in, and if accepting the challenge of ascertaining the relation with the art world. For the effects that the experience of organizing the event had on me, I will cite episodes related to it throughout the text.

hanging by a thread). Contact with a broader audience was vague and undeveloped" (Lippard, 1976, p. xvi). Also the *educational turn* faced a similar strife, since the dialogical platforms and formal innovations created to connect audience and artists, aroused the question of whether were not they excluding rather than including? Since they were orbiting around artistic events with a highly prolix discursivity, and sometimes presented formats unusual for an art space such as classroom organization or conference rooms, the audience of art used to more spectacular or accessible exhibitions, occasionally felt retracted rather than attracted, and compromised the whole dialogue goal and democratic pedagogy of the *educational turn*. The formats of presentation, documentation and distribution are of very high importance also for artistic research – the case of my organized seminar was an example of how delicate these issues still are in a secularized contemporary art environment.

Likewise, the artist-as-producer affirming in the 2000s has been developing work that seeks to bridge the artistic with an unknown audience, as if a link had been broken, perhaps already in Greenberg's era. The artist-as-producer's work is largely motivated by aspects of public-ness: not only seems important to interfere with the audience reception of the work of art, but also its public and social impact (or utility?) is part of the anxieties dealt with by the recently formed subjectivity. Henk Slager points out: "(...) Because of the deconstruction of the boundaries between art-education, science, and the domain of art practice - boundaries that were clung to in the former model for the sake of the principle of autonomy curricular space is claimed now for novel components in the program such as critical studies contextual studies. Collaborative and interdisciplinary projects, experimental productions, and above all for communicative and curatorial competencies. What becomes abundantly clear is that today artists should especially be able to present and contextualize their projects" (2012, p.7). These competencies may sound more like entrepreneurship skills, and they are certainly to be regarded not only as developments from within the artistic field, but as effects of the social and political context as well.

My protraction with Conceptual art was due to trail current practices of art-as-events that are taking place now. The fact that we today are presented with projects like *unitednationsplaza* (2007), *Nightschool* (2008), *Time Bank* (2011)³³, by e-flux contributors; *Mending Project* (2009)³⁴, by Lee Mingwei; *Sanatorium* (2011)³⁵, by Pedro Reyes; *Untilled* (2012)³⁶ by Pierre

³³ The three projects have the name of Anton Vidokle and are linked to e-flux. The first two are direct consequences of the cancellation of Manifesta 6 in Nicosia, which was being co-curated by Vidokle, and *Time Bank* was presented in 2012 Documenta 13.

³⁴ "... the artist invited visitors to bring their old clothes in to be repaired by him, initiating not only the mending of the wear and tear of their garments but, by implication, of the social fabric itself. During the course of the Biennale, the mended clothes accumulated, becoming the material remnants of shared thoughts and memories in fleeting conversations and stories". *Mending Project* was presented in 18th Biennale of Sydney, whose motto was "all our relations". More info <https://www.mca.com.au/collection/exhibition/592-18th-biennale-of-sydney/>. Last access on 05.05.2015.

Huyghe; *The storyteller, the knife and the machine* (2013)³⁷, by Yota Ioannidou³⁸; *Swapping coffee and custard for your knowledge and good company* (2014), a collaborative project of Andre Alves and Mick Wilson at Taipei Biennial 2014; participatory works by Tino Sehgal and the hospitable art-making of Rirkirt Tiravanija – and others alike, because these are just examples, is the result of a process of dematerialization of art-making through the inclusion of performative, relational and temporal dimensions in an object that is no longer object but an event. If Conceptualists pointed the way driven by anti-consumerism and institutional critique motivations, some contemporary artists add to that a complex educational commitment that was not still being considered in the late sixties. The educational turn can therefore be seen as predecessor of artistic research – although other complexities are at stake, too. It is the context of this educational commitment that I pretend to enlighten with the described framework, and it is its further study that the present dissertation is dedicated to (accounting its entanglement with academy, its presence in the artistic field, and its critique, not without resorting to particular cases and first-hand conversations).

It is generally taken for granted that today's artists have abandoned the idea of autonomous art to dedicate to the pursuit of connectedness. And idea, moreover, nourished by events like the 18th Biennale of Sidney. The examples of artworks I've given reinforce the consideration. However, this comes not as a matter of choice, and it definitely is not due to artists being sick with the idea of autonomy that they have gone the other way round. Perhaps because it was not first choice, we cannot tell that the theme is well settled in the back of their minds, and alike the Romantic self that simply will not go away – as remarked in Camiel van Winkel's "sandwich"³⁹ –, the desire for autonomy is still around if only to oppose to anything aiming to

³⁵ "Sanatorium is a transient clinic which provides short, unexpected therapies. The only way to experience this project is to sign up as a patient". *Sanatorium* premiered in 2011 in Guggenheim, New York, and was later exhibited in 2012 dOCUMENTA 13 and in Whitechapel, London. More info at <http://www.pedroreyes.net/sanatorium.php>. Last accessed on 05.05.2015.

³⁶ "Untilled" (2011-12), Huyghe's dOCUMENTA 13 project, is installed around a park's compost heap, although the installation's unfurling growth and insidious expansion — which includes a painted dog, a beehive-headed sculpture, poisonous fruits, and marijuana, among other natural resources — seems more predicated on the loss of artistic control. More info at <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/822127/pierre-huyghe-explains-his-buzzy-documenta-13-installation-and-why-his-work-is-not-performance-art#>. Last access on 05.05.2015.

³⁷ Presented in 4th Athens Biennial, this project is a performative lecture that calls on different narratives and transforms itself in a sort of working group with the participants discussing with the author. More info at: <http://www.yotaioannidou.net/links.html>. Last access on 05.05.2015.

³⁸ Yota Ioannidou is a visual artist and doctoral student of the PhDArts programme of Leiden University and Royal Academy of Art – KABK, The Hague.

³⁹ Quote of Camiel van Winkel about his conceptual sandwich: "The sandwich of academic-artistic discourse has at least three layers. The bottom layer – the oldest one – is the legacy of the Romantic cult of the artist. This is a heavy layer: rich, greasy and hard to digest. It's a thing from the past that will not go away. It is the cult of the mythical, hyper-individual artist, always true to his or her inner self... The middle layer in this triple-decker sandwich is the layer of post-structuralism... The important thing is that this second layer of the sandwich counteracts the first one. It undercuts the notion of authenticity and spontaneous creation. According to poststructuralism, there is no creative act that does not somehow reproduce earlier creative acts. The artist, or author, never "owns" his or her work. To think about art in terms of authorship and individual expression is a convention designed to limit the number of possible readings of the work in question... In reality, everything is text, and every text is made up of fragments of older texts. In post-structuralism, the "self" loses its centre; it is constituted by discourse, made up of signs and signifiers... The third layer of the sandwich is the most recent addition. It is also the most academic tier. I would describe it as the layer of cultural studies. The term cultural studies represents a specific approach to the academic study of culture that dates from

‘wrest’ any sacred sense of the artistic – I am thinking of all the almost instinctive criticism about the narrowing effects performed by academies on the otherwise expansive view on art. Modernism in art has sowed the seeds of a few everlasting specters, being autonomy probably the most problematic one in the present post-modern context. Autonomy caught all the attention of artists in the first half of the twentieth century, being converted in one of the emblematic struggles of modernism. Art for the art’s sake was the motto for more than fifty years (it must be much more, it was sensed in Romanticism and Impressionism before). This idea of detachment has provided the necessary freedom for artists to launch themselves in the most striking experiments. Fauvists were so encouraged to use the purest colours, without submitting to natural rules; Dadaists questioned language and dared to abolish logic, organization, rational attitude, bringing art into a spontaneous character and total gratuity; Surrealists exposed the psychological truth stripping off ordinary objects of their normal significance in order to create an image that was beyond ordinary formal organization. And so on. Artists did not report to anything than their own pathways and artistic interests. The image of the artist even today is surrounded by a certain amount of mysticism, and it will be always owing to past myths and nurturing a certain idea of nostalgia. Following this, sure that autonomy gathers the charms of an alluring aspiration which, even if a distant one, is still felt today. Conscious of their *ethos*, artists one time or another are confronted with the haunting figure of autonomy or by the fear of damaging its cherished keepsake. What the Modernism was able to achieve with the pursuit of autonomy is not to be forsaken. And some take upon themselves the role of gatekeepers of art and pretend to protect the autonomy of art and that of the art school.

Even so, the autonomy of art is no longer used as motto for an international exhibition, and in the twenty-first century hardly any artist will openly cherish art’s autonomy. Likewise originality, the desire exists, it is sensed under covered – “If you are a person who likes to think, you most probably want to produce an original thought every now and then, even though we all know that most things have been said and done (and thought of) already. We abandoned the idea of genius centuries ago. Still, when you sit down, think, and work, you do with the expectation, or at least desire, of producing an original idea. The question is, how?” (Kopelman, 2014, p.20) -, but it is not publicly stated for having been declared outdated or utopian. As mentioned back in the text, the curators’ statement for the 18th Biennale of Sidney points to a connectedness already in course in society, something that art is attempting to

the 1970s. This approach entails the consideration of all levels of culture, in the widest sense of the term, dismissing the conventional division between high art and mass culture. It considers the production, dissemination and reception of culture to be intimately related to aspects of ideology, class, nationality, politics, economics, ethnicity, and gender. Thus the aim of cultural studies is to understand how meaning is produced in specific social and cultural practices...” (van Winkel, 2013, p. 3).

keep up with. Something resembling a promise of stability after decades where the rupture of the avant-garde set the tone of the movement. Through this lens, contemporary art would be one reached level, a ground to stay, as an artistic movement in its own right, and a culmination following a succession of shifts in history. If previously the idea of autonomous art commanded every new shift, by the end of the twentieth century it is permeability (and thus connectedness) that now colours the pathway. The shifts populating contemporary art are not anymore too deep shifts whose common ground would be the quest for autonomy, but are instead the very shifts that society at large faces: economic changes, social convulsions and political episodes, all are embodied in art and become openly part of artists' focuses. Contemporary art has synched with the developments of a global order, became permeable and interventional at the same time (through *aestheticization*, for instance, pointing out the dead useless bodies of a dysfunctional society), also reflecting the neoliberal practices arouse in the aftermath of a call for globalization. For this alignment, some authors agreed that contemporary art might be perceived as an artistic movement whose beginning is the 1989 collapse of the Berlin Wall.

The fact that the panorama is that of a tending-to-stabilization level in artistic developments, one which goes with the name 'contemporary art' and is all-encompassing society's pulse, leaves us with the question of what to do now? What are the challenges posed to art now if not to look for 'the next big thing' anymore?

It can be said that the previous narrative of shifting from a paradigm into another has resulted in an abandonment of autonomy in face of globalization. With it came the fever of connectedness, the ubiquity of sameness, and the acceleration of time. In line with this, no more shifts could be longed for, since there was no time anymore to consume a model and jump into another: the stages of the process simply diluted and happened in simultaneity. For the first time in the history of art there is not the possibility to look analytically in retrospect to a recent phenomenon without letting escape the rest of the ongoing movements, which means that there is no time to create the modes of looking at without missing updates or new formations. In other words, contemporary art has not yet set up the frameworks through which one should observe such contemporaneity. When that time comes it means that contemporaneity, or a certain aspect of contemporaneity, has become an "obsolete corpse" (Groys, 2014), "defunctionalized", simply to look at, but already displaced. It would mean that contemporary art would have been comprised into an image, aestheticized and, eventually, broken. What an iconoclast aestheticization proposes in this context is the displacement of such critical aspects portrayed in its images, so that in the spaces left blank can emerge alternative forms.

If this happens with contemporary art, it happens with its forms. In this sense, art-as-events developed since the sixties and refined after 1989 are also perceived as stabilized, stuck in contemporary seismic activities, and therefore the will to shift to other paradigm has been turned into a hub of *experimentalism*. While contemporary art is, to a certain extent, entertained with being contemporary, and thus logically unable – let alone it does not matter anymore - to move forward, its activities tend to experiment with ways to be contemporary. Experienciality of art-as-event has been replaced by *experimentalism* with art-as-event.

Stuck? In the mobility era?

Mobility was becoming an issue in art in the late 60s and 70s, sort of presaging globalization coming through the destruction of the soon to fall Berlin Wall. It is only after the fall of the Berlin Wall that one can speak of proper globalization. Prior to that, contextualized in the artistic realm, mobility was being dealt with in strategies of portable art, like mail art, self-publication and cheap artist books, especially in the person of Seth Sieglaub, but also in other initiatives of the Conceptualists. At that time, the art journal/magazine has gained a renewed interest, for it allowed not only to convey information about art but also, due to the current characteristics it was experimenting, become art itself. There is this episode which Lucy Lippard describes on the introduction of her *Six Years*: "In 1970, Sieglaub, with the enthusiastic support of editor Peter Townsend, took over an issue of the then lively British journal *Studio International* and made it a kind of magazine exhibition with six 'curators' (critics David Antin, Germano Celant, Michel Claura, Charles Harrison, Hans Strelow, and myself). We were each given eight pages and could fill them however we liked, with whatever artists we liked, doing whatever they liked. Claura chose only Buren, who striped his pages in yellow and white; Strelow chose Dibbets and Darboven; the rest of us chose eight artists with a page each. My 'show' was a round robin. I asked each artist to provide a 'situation' within which the next artist was to work, so the works created one cumulative, circular piece. (For example: Weiner to Kawara: 'Dear On Kawara, I must apologize but the only situation I can bring myself to impose upon you would be my hopes for your having a good day. Fond regards, Lawrence Weiner.' Kawara replied with a telegram: I AM STILL ALIVE, sent to LeWitt, who responded by making a list of seventy-four permutations of that phrase)" (1973, p. xviii). Ads in newspapers were also used as works of art themselves, so not to announce exhibitions of works of art - something Hans Haacke has resorted to in the eighties again.

Additionally, radically dematerialized art was not being carried out by artists, but overlapped with the artists' selves, since it was all about language, statements, and mental operations – nothing hands and arms can transport.

Mobility had also become a matter of decentralization, both in institutional terms and geography-wise. Art world center New York was diluting the leadership with Europe again. Migration between private and public sectors, namely in money fluxes occurring from the former to the latter, completely changed the logics of public sphere. Stephan Dilleuth puts it in the following way: "The so-called 'public sphere' - which was formerly a domain of the state - now seems to have been increasingly handed over to the interests of the ever-merging international corporations. In a kind of reversal of the forces of imperialism and colonialism, the weakened nation states are nowadays more afraid of the forces of capital withdrawing or pulling out. Submitting themselves to a new order and global competition, they cut wages and dismantle social security, just to attract 'investment' from those who were traditionally called 'exploiters'" (Dilleuth, 2002, n/p). The new decentralized public sphere, as it meanwhile transmuted with the penetration of private interests, gained an entire new face and influenced much of what was to happen in art from the 90s onwards. Artistic research, as a disciplinary field, largely owes to these transformations operated in public-ness. In the inverted logic of the public sphere that turned contemporary university into ruins, Stephan Dilleuth sees potential for research "... as a tool for exploring the possibilities and uncertainties of the situation" (Dilleuth, 2011, p. 224). And also he says that, "... research has to work against its own limitation. Research into the mechanisms of control has to be part of research itself. This means that it is necessary for research to control its controller; research can work, has to work against its strictures" (Dilleuth, 2011, pp. 226-227)

It should be expected from an era prioritizing connectedness, mobility and globalism that communication would be an obvious operation and output, simultaneously. The same is valid to contemporary art, where the concern with public reception of the works of art should be anything else rather than a nuance of zealotry. The artist-as-producer is symptomatic of the topical concern with public-ness, but into what direction goes such concern? Is it aimed at reconnection in a sense of share of information, of promotion of democratic structures of knowledge production, or rather is it a self-defensive strategy, in order to control the information once it leaves the artist and enters the public sphere? The flourishing literature produced in the interest of art-making and art-reception could so be taken as a sign of the fluid communication of the present times, but how unselfish and spontaneous is that lively production?

The gained permeability of contemporary art – at the expense of autonomy – has exposed the art domain to the recent neoliberal order and its powers. Since it is "art in and of the epoch of neoliberalism", "[c]an we speculate collectively on how to move beyond the present confines of Contemporary Art's normalized and normalizing practices, and articulate what can appear

from Contemporary Art's 'formerness'?" (BAK basis voor aktuel kunst, 2012)⁴⁰ Does this mean that the textual prolificacy is hooked in a neoliberal framing, and that it corresponds to a "normalizing practice" of contemporary art? Is it possible that what was thought as a liberating and empowering practice – isn't that in the horizon of all research? – is, after all, a consequence of political, economic and social seismic activity, and part of neoliberal normalization? Has the *new materialism* been *aestheticized*? Is artistic research, understood in the context of the *experimentalism* of art-as-event, episodic *iconoclasm*?

To this respect, communication may not be mistaken with distribution. Bookshops, libraries, seminars, workshops, exhibitions and press releases all display and supply the *new materialism* resulting from the *educational turn* that anchors the artist-as-producer. The access is democratic, because the form is popular. In a society of knowledge with an economy based on information as capital, books, journals, and conferences gather the preference of users, and "[w]ithin the art world today, the discursive formats of the extended library-cum-seminar-cum-workshop-cum-symposium-cum-exhibition have become preeminent modes of address and forms of knowledge production" (Holert, 2009, n/p). The content, in turn, remains closed down for the wide public, opening up for the exclusive community of the art world. The same goes for art-as-events fulfilling the biennials of the last decade, in the trail of relational aesthetics and participatory projects. As sensed with the educational turn, is this prolix discursivity being produced, confusingly as an experimental art form, or as critical pedagogy, or as a new intellectualism of artists concerned with the public-ness their works, or as an adopted self-reflexivity by post-Conceptual artists, risking entailing the commodification of knowledge and *aestheticizing* artistic research? Are we stuck in this situation?

And how can artist researchers produce in their own field without seeing their outcomes automatically seized by this commodification of knowledge and bureaucratic entrepreneurship command of contemporary university? André Alves speaks of this contemporary attitude as an "aesthetic of the impasse: a present lacking potential actuality. That is, the capacity and incapacity to use the disquiet, to profit from contingency, to imagine possibilities without being immediately subdued by the belief that they will not effect any transformation" (Alves, 2014, p. 5) – and, in the worst case, that they will actually nourish the realities that such acts originally want to resist to. And how to transform this disquiet of the impasse of experimentalism into something potential.

⁴⁰ Part of the text of the 3rd Former West Research Congress that took place on 19 and 20 April 2012 at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and Secession, Vienna. Former West is a long-term international research, education, publishing, and exhibition project (2008–2016), which from within the field of contemporary art and theory: (1) reflects upon the changes introduced to the world (and thus to the so-called West) by the political, cultural, artistic, and economic events of 1989; (2) engages in rethinking the global histories of the last two decades in dialogue with post-communist and postcolonial thought; and (3) speculates about a "post-bloc" future that recognizes differences yet evolves through the political imperative of equality and the notion of "one world."

In conclusion, the unobstructed channels do not necessarily ensure that communication takes place when the fundamental common ground necessary to set the connection is missing. I will not go so far as to say that the ubiquity of distribution platforms is paradoxically jamming communication, but their prosperity is an aspect to account in terms of the formation, role, and appreciation of artistic research as a field.

Fetish for collaboration

Considering that artistic practice is a form of cultural production (a notion which, in itself, contains a wide span of activities ranging from more critical to more passive models), it seems that a short acknowledgement of the frames of production that currently operate in society might be insightful to not only contextualize what emerged as contemporary art in post-Conceptualism, but also to locate in its womb the formation of something eventually called artistic research. By saying this I've just revealed artistic research as not only a direct branch of contemporary art, but I also attributed to social circumstances of production its appearance. In the turn of the twenty to the twenty-first century the changes occurred in society's production of culture are conceptualized either as a transition from an industrial society to a post-industrial society, or from a disciplinary society to a society of control (Mouffe, 2008). The first focuses on how industry has influenced that transition, generally pointing cultural industry either as a cause or as a result in the reach of the post-fordist era, while the second is informed by an exercise of control that expanded from the enclosed spaces of school, hospitals, prisons and fabrics, to new procedures linked to networks, accessibility and separation between belonging and not belonging. In the societies of control, bodies once disciplined in a centralized system of production have switched to bodiless entities regulated by mechanisms of access and mobility, and glide now in virtual globalized environments, where smoothness and ambiguity replaced the noisy and the hardness of metallic machinery. The new spaces of enclosure for the dematerialized bodies are "molds, distinct castings" in constant modulation and reconstruction. These are the spaces of production of subjectivity, which in their entire complexity ought to be regarded in the both senses of a renovated bio-power in the society of control: as an effect of governmentality (in the foucaultian signification of the term) and, at the same time, as the possibility of resistance to the constraints of the advanced capitalist society. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, for instance, stress that the new governmentality in the post-industrial era allows for more autonomous forms of subjectivity (Hardt & Negri, 2004), which, in the context of communicability and connectedness, "... can express themselves freely and contribute to the formation of a new set of social relations that will finally replace the capitalist system" (Mouffe, 2008, p. 152). Such freedom is, nonetheless,

what makes the new subjects active in their own precarisation, as portrayed in Adam Curtis documentary *The Trap* (2007)⁴¹. Curtis presents a society modeled through data/information and directed at constant bettering of performance through self-exploitation and self-valuation. The production of subjectivities is therefore the critical point of this society of control, both where its effectiveness is most felt, but also where a chance of resistance – or of salvation, would argue the most optimistic – is deployed. The potential of the subject is, perhaps, one of the most fundamental aspects of the phenomenon of artistic research, and where it finds its true *raison d'être*. Besides the circumstances of a political, economic and social interest in the approximation of art and knowledge production, and beyond the increasing self-consciousness of artists in the development of the narrative of dematerialization of the object of art, artistic research finds in the processes of subjectivity its real motivation and focus of activity. And carries with it the tensions that largely characterize it, between being or resisting being; doing, or stay in the impasse; producing or feed *productivism*; the tensional dualities are the organs composing the body of artistic research.

For this reason, the ways individuals become subjects, either led by resistance intents or with imposed regimes of truth in which they self-recognize and are recognized by others, is of crucial importance to understand art in the context of immanent capitalism and the sequent developments that made possible the appearance of a field named artistic research. Certain axioms of the social-political field have been followed like artistic *ethos*, and therefore require an attentive critical view. The terms collaboration, network and interdisciplinarity, have penetrated in the artistic field as well as in the literature of artistic research, seemingly due to the porosity of these in relation to social and political activities. Participatory practices that this text previously referred to are also a sign of this porosity and provide one similar axis that has invaded specific areas of contemporary art since, especially, the 90s.

Florian Schneider says that “Facing the challenges of digital technologies, global communications, and networking environments, as well as the inherent ignorance of traditional systems towards these, ‘working together’ has emerged as an unsystematic mode of collective learning processes. Slowly and almost unnoticeably, a new word came into vogue. At first sight it might seem the least significant common denominator for describing new modes of working together, yet ‘collaboration’ has become one of the leading terms of an emergent contemporary political sensibility” (Schneider, 2006, p. 249). The capital in a society of control is of immanent nature and, according to Paolo Virno, in advanced capitalism “... the labor process has become performative and it mobilizes the most universal requisites of the

⁴¹ More info at: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0979263/synopsis?ref_=ttr_ov_pl. Last access on 22.06.2015.

species: perception, language, memory and feelings. Contemporary production is ‘virtuosic’ and productive labor in its totality appropriates the special characteristics of the performing artist” (Virno as quoted in Mouffe, 2008, p.152). What results is that the mentioned labour requisites overlap with life attributes, and all are apprehended with artistic practice, through process, collaboration, networking, affectivity and, especially, the production of subjectivities: “In late industrial capitalism, the notion of teamwork represented the subjugation of workers’ subjectivity to an omnipresent and individualized control regime. The concept of group replaced the classical one of ‘foremanship’ as the disciplining force. Rather than through repression, cost efficiency was increased by means of peer-pressure and the collective identification of relatively small groups of multi-skilled co-workers” (Schneider, 2006, p. 250). Tero Nauha⁴², currently exploring the relations of his artistic practice with the context of “immanent capitalism”, has appositely summed up this present era as one where we are confronted with the fact that “... the division between work and leisure has become obsolete, and that the value of production is mostly created by the general human abilities such as sociability or affective capacity, instead of with arms, legs and rational minds”⁴³. Most artistic practice, since Conceptual art, has welcomed participatory and collaborative projects, minded in the immanent capital framework and reinforced by sociologic, and sometimes even medical informed theories spawning the benefits of the relational skills in current times of purportedly fragmentation and individualism. This is sort of related to the previous consideration of the generalized social pressure over individuals to be together and to find their humanity in sociability. Even without evidence, it is commonly imputed to the industrialist Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), one of the wealthiest nineteenth century U.S. businessmen, the quote “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results”. The fragment is widely spread in entrepreneurship training events and management of human resources centres, precisely because the optimism attained to collaborative work is also resulting from management theory that makes people think that “...in a teamwork environment, people are supposed to understand and believe that thinking, planning, decisions and actions are better when done in cooperation” (Schneider, 2006, p. 249). One can thus speak of a collaborative *ethos* inscribed in these subjects, and so widely accepted often without questioning its roots by artists who uncritically mobilize such capitalist axioms.

⁴² Teroa Nauha is a performance artist and student of the doctoral programme of Theatre Academy Helsinki – TeaK, and also part of the TAHTO programme, also based in Helsinki.

⁴³ Extract from Tero Nauha “Synopsis for the dissertation”, written on January 3, 2015. Given this is still being worked on, I will not include it in the bibliography.

It is now time for a state of the play. The presented scenario is brought by socio-political changes occurred in the sixties and seventies, against authority figures, as was happening the shift from a disciplined industrialized society to a post-fordist society of control. The 'working together' was envisaged as a way to break authoritarian figures, in political life, art and in education – the model of master-pupil, and the figure of the foremanship, as instances. From that time until now, and intimately related to the ethos of 'working together', persists the idea that consensus is a democratic goal. Therefore, every procedure that follows the similar principles of synchronism, harmony and stabilization, is welcomed as a good unquestionable thing, and its proponents are automatically regarded as good-doers. It is not a surprise that in times of crisis participatory projects – which eventually lead to collaborative processes – are particularly successful at hushing social and political agitation due to their egalitarian propensity.

However, a more in-depth view reveals that at stake in most of the participatory and collaborative practices is the dilution of critical possibilities that find obstruction under populist arguments such as 'inclusion', 'negotiation', 'everyone's voice having an equal weight' and that 'majority equals smartness' (Miessen, 2010, pp. 13-14). In these terms, the chance of diverging thought, and the possibilities that it succeeds within a group, are decreased, since 'criticality' is replaced with 'majority of opinions'. This is how participatory and collaborative endeavours can easily be transformed in dead ends, whose only aim is to keep the involved people occupied with the illusion of the aforementioned demagogic terms. Florian Schneider speaks of a "hypocrisy of the supposed anti-authoritarianism that essentially underlies many notions of cooperation", where "... a presumption of equality actually extends both discrimination and exploitation while seemingly providing continuous evidence in support of such an illusion, as if there were no radically different modes of working together" (2006, pp. 250-251).

In the art world, this establishment of collaboration is also evident and in many cases has even become the goal of the proposals, instead of a procedural circumstance. Ubiquitous in practice and discursivity, the axiomatic idea of collaboration has contributed definitely to shape a certain way to be an artist in the turn of the century. The opening words of the seminar at *Ice Breaking Fantasies Festival* in Helsinki, organized by TAhto in September 2014, took the form of a short conversation between Esa Kirkkopelto and Leena Rouhiainen⁴⁴ about, exactly: collaboration. They interviewed each other, and Leena Rouhiainen came up with two ideas on collaboration: first our collaboration with others, but also the collaboration with oneself. Being

⁴⁴ The two teach at Theatre Academy, University of the Arts, Helsinki. Board members of TAhto, and Leena Rouhiainen has become recently a member of the board of the European SAR – Society for Artistic Research.

a choreographer and dance artist, she basically was referring to collaboration with her body, and her organs, and to such physicality needed for movement and performances. Despite such a view could harbor in a dichotomist view of body and originate a wholly new reflection on my part, I'll just say that the episode is plain in showing how the theme of collaboration manifests itself with such ease and plainness, to the extreme of the subject collaborate with herself. Among the reasons for such emphasis in collaborative practices within these realms is the construction of an interesting image to the outside, in accordance to the socio-political framing of the consensus. Also the adequacy to the terminology of grants and funding applications encourages multidisciplinary and networked projects. The public funding entities have latest been privileging networked collaborations, sometimes at international level, encouraging the connection and relationship among a few countries as a requisite for some kinds of funds (The Network 29: Arts Education of the European Educational Research Association – EERA, is project proposed for funding by our Research Group in Arts Education in the Research Institute in Art, Design and Society, and gathers a plurality of nationalities among Convenors, as well as their associated universities: Portugal, United Kingdom, Spain and Czech Republic. The programme of the TAHTO group, whose implementation was due in part to the dedication of Esa Kirkkopelto, required the joint organization of several institutions in order to get the fund by Academy of Finland).

Be it to adequate to socio-political rhetoric or to earn funding, there is a desire to correspond to pseudo-democratic requirements. Since collaboration is envisaged, legitimacy and interest are found out.

In what concerns funding supplies, projects carried forward by a set of few entities, institutions and research groups are better regarded than attempts of singulars. The higher is the number of involved entities, the better for the supplying entity, who will likely spend less money and efforts than in the case of several separate projects. This should also not dismiss an enlightened interpretation through the lens of capitalism.

The fetish with collaboration has also entered the educational and institutional fields, to levels in which sometimes is hard to uncover what is really mobilizing all the initiatives, especially in the cases where means is confused with aims. An excerpt of a succinct overview of Henk Slager on the Dutch panorama in higher arts education gives evidence of the interconnectivity of many institutional initiatives. He says: "In other Dutch graduate programs, however, one sees cooperations with the humanities departments in local universities. Take, for example, the MA program in Visual Art of the Frank Mohr Institutes, in Groningen... Similar experiments occur at the Amsterdam Sandberg Institute – the MA at the Rietveld Academy – in collaboration with the University of Amsterdam. Also the Amsterdam Rijksacademie – just like the Jan van Eyck

Academy in Maastricht, a post-graduate program – focuses on a collaboration with the University of Amsterdam, albeit from a different perspective” (Slager, 2004, p. 35). Indeed, in a strategic perspective, Royal Academy of Art in The Hague has set up a collaboration with University of Leiden in order to position artistic research in a Humanities background and therefore be allowed to root a doctoral course in art, the PhDArts programme. Henk Slager goes on: “The Rijksacademie curriculum emphasizes an individual research program by the students. Such research concentrates on artistic knowledge production, whereby relevant academic disciplines are meant to help one arrive at a dialogue, a confrontation, or a collaboration. The awareness of heterogeneity requires that artistic research explicitly appeals to a tolerant, open attitude and multiple, interpretative models. Deploying phenomena such as cross-overs and found-footage, the perspective of the multiplicity and a poly-aesthetic attitude should always function as a regulating guideline” (Slager, 2004, pp. 35-37). In a sense it is present the risk of lacking a predicate for collaboration and networking: the moment in which they become regulatory attitudes and thus turned into *ethos*. One has always to ask: where is the predicate of this collaboration? Why was collaboration needed? Whose interests did it serve? The same goes for interactivity and networked environment. The relational aesthetics showcase of the biennial of Lyon ‘95, co-curated by Nicholas Bourriaud, should not be forgotten. In “L’expérience de la durée”, the subtitle of the exhibition, art, culture, fashion and spectacle were hand-in-hand to present a set of immersive works appealing to the most populist audience – and leaving apart critical discourse.

In the 2004 *Artistic Research* milestone book, Annette W. Balkema speaks about collaboration and think tanks in the visual arts for the purpose of “liquid knowledge”. She mentions artists’ interest in urbanism in the second half of the 1990s as a new form of collaboration, to which followed visual interest in music festivals, interactivity and all sorts of media art-type work. Balkema declares that “I do believe, though, that the field of visual art and other fields I mentioned could be mutually inspiring while working in new forms of collaboration and new forms of think tanks. Such collaborations could be the basis for experimental artistic research projects and produce liquid forms of artistic knowledge” (Balkema, 2004, pp. 15-16). Without prejudice for the expansion of possibilities brought by collaborations and cooperation, my argument is that these should be envisaged not as ends in themselves, but as procedural strategies that contribute to a more satisfying outcome of the process. Balkema’s experimentalism, in the context of the beginning of the twenty-first century has to make clear which position wants to occupy in the field, if that of collaboration or of cooperation, in the terms Florian Schneider describes: “Collaboration entails rhizomatic structures where knowledge grows exuberantly and proliferates in unforeseeable ways. In contrast to

cooperation, which always implies an organic model and a transcendent function, collaboration is a strictly immanent and wild praxis.” (2006, p. 253). In this sense of immateriality, what matters in these collaborative projects is not the seizing of ideas, the achievement and fixing of products constructed at several hands, but much more the connections established, the networks entered and the access gained instantly to otherwise blocked stances. Collaboration as taken in this text is related more to the contact between individuals, channels of communication among them, than necessarily the being physically together and making things in presence of other collaborators. It might be a very bodiless collaboration. Also, it matters to remark the difference, collaboration reunites individuals with singularities, that is to say, it happens between individuals whose differences are the reason for they being in contact; whereas cooperation reunites a number of individuals in order to reach a common goal, disregarding their singularities. Mobility, so important in the approximation of the different selves in contact, has also its dark side for its ‘ever-in-motion’ image is responsible for the self-precarisation deployed in the instability generated. Everything is temporary and fluid, including occupations, subjectivities and skills; therefore everything is insecure and precarious, “in constant modulation and reconstruction” in order to remain interesting and necessary.

The words of Florian Schneider distinguishing cooperation as an organic model operating with institutions from the more fluid regime of collaboration, find reinforcement in the confessional tone of Charles Harrison, as he reports his disillusion with the present state of affairs in art academies and how these are relating education and research. To Harrison’s view, the extreme competition for funding is mining the work inside departments and in university in general, pushing true productive collaborations out of the institutions where they are not affected by competitive edge among peers: “Institutions are bidding competitively with each other for money and, consequently, are also bidding competitively with each other to attract staff. .. And then let us say that you have been successful in the competition and that your department has been well funded. As the monies flow in, you and your colleagues, in turn, have to bid in competition with each other. This is the world in which we now live in. Under this regime, on what grounds are we going to represent the value of the projects in which we are involved? If I have a dream... of research as something that is co-operative and collaborative, then it seems to me that I can now only keep that dream alive outside those institutions which offer me employment” (Harrison, 2009, pp. 143-144).

Back to *Artistic research* published in 2004, Henk Slager points out: “The first predominant question is directed towards the locality and function of artistic practice in our current and postindustrial economic world. Isn’t it true that the currently dominant culture of non-material

production requires new types of artists, described by Neri and Hardt (*Empire*) as people flexible enough to organize their artistic activities ad-hoc? Such artists produce work that can no longer be characterized and defined by mere medium-specific reflection. Based upon a critical and investigative attitude, they also search for novel media combinations and variable collaborations with different fields of knowledge” (Slager, 2004, p. 34). The doubt that arises – and the reason for never losing awareness in face of axioms – is whether the novel human abilities that value production are necessary to live in the postindustrial contemporaneity, or if it is not the case that these competencies are fabricated desires for a society where no longer exists compatibility in the supply of training and the market demands; where there are no more vacancies in the labor market and so a new ideal of worker has to be constructed and sold. The desire is then inscribed in all of us through regulative outlines present in professional objectives and social achievement such as tolerance, heterogeneity, multiculturalism and difference – and “multiplicity” and “poly-aesthetic attitude” (Slager, 2004, p. 37). After all, who can possibly be against these democratic and sympathetic terms? In order to devalue and bridge the capitalist failure at the humanitarian level, these abilities of collaboration, sociability and affectivity are distributed as axioms and inscribed in the subjects as *ethos*, rendering processes of subjectivation which spread in trans-territorial rhythms as if a natural necessity of the human being was at stake. I do not mean that collaboration is detrimental for itself; I mean that it is not beneficial and productive *per se* in creative terms – whilst it surely is so in political terms.

Hans Ulrich Obrist interestingly says that it’s about time to break the consensus machine, and Markus Miessen, who’s been publishing about participation since 2006, assures his criticality towards participation and collaboration is not against an idea of democracy, but rather “... a sheer interest in critical and productive change” (2010, p. 14). In view of this, collaboration may be regarded as an alignment with the willingness of the ruling system. At the respect of the potential for criticality, also Bonnie Honig (1993), or Chantal Mouffe (2000), had long pled for an agonist democracy, exactly highlighting the importance of spaces of conflict for the avoidance of crystallization of the ruling powers due to lack of public resistance.

The proposal of a ‘conflict consensus’, that is the creation of spaces of conflict on purpose, instead of leaning to an incipient consensus, could be regarded as a way to deal with such excess brought by the installment of participatory-collaborative-networked *ethos*. It would require not a struggle against authoritarian figures, by simply claiming for their breaking up, but, instead, would mean a resistance founded in the recognition of those figures as counterweights for a more informed and critical approach to the world. Artistic research is appointed by some as the territory in which art has at disposal elements and tools to explore

such power-knowledge relations, since one foot is within an institution devoted to cooperation, and the other foot stands in the territory of art world where the practice has been lately shaped by collaborative impetus. However, such emancipatory role cannot be taken uncritically, once again, since it is possible that the more one tries to explain and mediate knowledge, the more the distance and inequality is affirmed between a territory where knowledge stands – the academy, and the grounds where stand those who're willing to learn – the artists.

If not within a conflict consensus, collaboration cannot be taken as a way-to-proceed in artistic research. Whereas placed in the academy, artistic research has forcibly to deal with the valuing of authorship, which is something collaboration goes exactly the opposite way. By cherishing singularity, in the sense that it is the capital potential of each individual that makes the collaboration more or less interesting, collaborative projects do not necessarily value authorship, which in turn is about having a fixed reference for access and evaluation. Collaboration is about temporary access and fluidity, while artistic research has still to find ways of combining the dilution of the authorship as a controlling reference for assessment with the desire for fluidity and appropriable culture – if, that is, these two are incompatible in any sense. In these terms, artistic research and the art world may run separate directions.

Micro-politics in art as complex narratives

There is, however, little room to stay outside, marginal, or even none. It is quite a task not to follow the rules that smoothly are imposed, and not to play along the self-precariousness, and to be the subject the system has prepared us to be, and so to be instrumentalized. In his research synopsis, Tero Nauha wrote that "... instead of aiming for the 'next big thing', which is evidently a function in the artistic and academic practice, I would rather aim for small ideas, small thinking or thinking minor – as a kind of heretic and acknowledge the aspect of virtualization of the immanence in artistic practice, instead of to search for an ontology of such a practice"⁴⁵. With his assertion, Nauha stresses an important aspect of the advanced capitalist society, which I will sort as a kind of stagnation, ironically deriving from post-Cold War globalization. This "stagnation" is the end of the narrative of shifts that characterized Modernism in the arts as its driving force, but which the circumstances of globalization have returned obsolete. In the stagnation environment, one would not anymore aim for "the next big thing", no longer animated by the will of changing to the next hosting artistic narrative, but instead such stagnation serves as the ground of experimentalism – it does not mean a

⁴⁵ Extract from Tero Nauha "Synopsis for the dissertation", written on January 3, 2015. Given this is still being worked on, I will not include it in the bibliography.

necessary dead end, yet it acquires the instable contours of the “impasse” as described by Andre Alves in *Experimental Aesthetics* (2014).

The image is that of adventuring into a city that challenges us, that constantly asks for and appeals to a subjective function, in opposition to objectification. This city is a “... social and conflicting zone, renegotiating [its] limits through constant transformation. ... Opposing the politics of consensus, critical spatial practice should propose fostering micro-political participation in the production of space, and ask how one can contribute to alien fields of knowledge, professions, or discourses from the point of view of ‘space’” (Miessen, 2010, p. 20-21). The work Michel Foucault has developed on the notion of micro-politics appears relevant to this respect, especially in the importance given to the division of subjects - a subject that is objectified and divided from others by structured powers of institutions (mad and not mad, or criminal and not criminal) -, and the ways into which the subject turns himself into a subject, as a resistance strategy (also Hardt and Negri in *Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004) retained this possibility for subjectivation). The second requires a new economy of power relations, one more centered in micro-politics, which “... is more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and which implies more relations between theory and practice” (Foucault, 1982, p.780), and whose anti-authority struggles are “immediate”: “In such struggles people criticize instances of power which are the closest to them, those which exercise their action on individuals. They do not look for the ‘chief enemy’ but for the immediate enemy. Nor do they expect to find a solution to their problem at a future date (that is, liberations, revolutions, end of class struggle). In comparison with a theoretical scale of explanations or a revolutionary order which polarizes the historian, they are anarchistic struggles” (Foucault, 1982, p. 780). Processes of subjectivation become a critical point in this view, because they either can be regarded as a government of the individuality, when it ties individuals to identities and their sequent regimes of truth in which they are inscribed, or as a stronghold, as resistance to the forms in which knowledge circulates and imposes representations.

When the focus is not in the “... solution to their problem at a future date (that is, liberations, revolutions, end of class struggle)” (Foucault, 1982, p. 780), also in art the attentions are directed at the more empirical situations, the more immediate occurrences and day-to-day observations. The important thing is therefore the process, and not the hegemonic product. It is not of primary importance to reach anywhere, but the importance is retrieved especially in walking the path, in experiment after experiment. And all this not without a spark of utopia: the ever unaccomplished journey whose value resides in walking through, to continue walking through.

The generated afflux to a more united Europe, and with it the world as well, has spread the word (and the visuals) in such velocity that it was no longer interesting to consider the grand idealistic dreams, but to transfer the transformative potentiality of intellect, art and other cultural productions to the local and the level of micro-politics. Michel Foucault, and also Gilles Deleuze, have redefined the role of the intellectual to the local, and thus to the realm of personal concerns, leaving aside the representational dimension that formerly was assigned. Deleuze says, in a 1979 conversation with Foucault, that "[a] theorising intellectual, for us, is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness. Those who act and struggle are no longer represented, either by a group or a union that appropriates the right to stand as their conscience. Who speaks and acts? It is always a multiplicity, even within the person who speaks and acts. All of us are "groupuscules". Representation no longer exists; there's only action-theoretical action and practical action which serve as relays and form networks". (Foucault, 1980, n/p). This ultimately means that *experimentalism*, as brought by these circumstances, is linked to the individual concerns of the artist, and no longer attached to a universal abstract idea. The locality and its immediacy and idiosyncratic complexity are where the potentiality of change resides.

Such view both backgrounds the subjectivity of the artist of immanent capitalism era, who is therefore entitled to relate to the immediate surroundings, and, as the intellectual is reformed, also is the artist researcher, who is given legitimation to explore particular aspects without the aspiration of universality.

Although the migration from representational to local may seem, at first sight, a reinforcement of authorship, it is not so. An instance of evidence that authorship isn't the motif is overt in the relevance acquired by strategies of narration and storytelling in the context of art-making, where meaning is relativized by integrating facts and subjects into experiences of the writer/artist⁴⁶: "What is represented through narration is not so much a claim for an objective truth but the account of an event through experience. Personal, particular experience as opposed to a purported universalized account of an event that is usually constructed to serve the genealogy of history" (Geyer, 2008, p.132). These experiences can be therefore appropriated and re-utilized, without regard to their ever original source and owing authority: "A storyteller never aims to convey the pure essence of things but rather integrates the subjects into her own experience, makes them part of her being. In that form – as an integral part of the storyteller – they exist indeterminately but in no static or fixed form; they are available to be re-articulated at any given moment, any number of times" (Geyer, 2008, p.

⁴⁶ Also see Walter Benjamin, *The storyteller in Illuminations* (1969).

132). Geyer's words largely resemble those of Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* (1958): "... it is also because of this medium, in which action alone is real, that it 'produces' stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things. These stories may then be recorded in documents and monuments, they may be visible in use objects or art works, they may be told and retold and worked into all kinds of material" (Arendt, 1998, pp. 183-184).

Another instance of this storytelling, narrative creation as artistic research endeavor, comes from the side of Jeremy Diggle. His work notches well the networked structure of internet, the immaterial *medium per se*, proceeding in his artistic practice, as in his artistic research, in such a way that it is "...the antithesis of such straight-as-an-arrow storytelling. The work is principally an exploration of how far you can push the mechanics of storytelling over space and time rather than an exercise in good storytelling" (Amery, 2010)⁴⁷. In his visual experimentation, Diggle accounts the ecology advocated by Benjamin in his ability to spin an idea around, as "his adventurous, inquisitive mind ensure his world is one under perpetual reconstruction" (Mark Amery as quoted in Hurrell, 2010). More than any species of conclusion or result achieved by the process applied, the most remarkable aspect of Diggle's procedures is the process of assembling things and from their combination giving meanings once absent. And this is both valid for the artist who mobilizes many sources to go through his investigation, interpreting and re-interpreting a stance of reality, as well as for the spectator, who is therefore invited to redesign his or her relation to that particular stance of reality.

John Baldessari is one name not to be missed from a debate of artistic research pretended rooted in the art field. He has included text at some point, along with his Conceptualist fellows, interested in studying the codes both used by images and text, and their possible articulations. In the seventies, Baldessari started to increasingly apply collage techniques and appropriation of pre-existing images, rather than text, yet driven by the same understanding of images as code conveyors. The fact that the resulting works assemble images with disparate natures and unrelated, suggests a complex narrative, a genuine investigation on the part of the artist that combines cropping, distortion and a sense of communication that invites the beholder to engage in the narrative exposed. One of Baldessari's famous statements is: "When I am doing art, I am questioning how to do it"⁴⁸, dashing his work into a research process that is intimately intertwined with the artistic outputs. This also is in line with Stephan Dilleuth's idea of

⁴⁷ Mark Amery critical review of Jeremy Diggle exhibition *Narvik's Complaint* at New Zealand Film Archive, in November 2010. Retrieved from <http://eyecontactartforum.blogspot.nl/2010/02/mark-amery-tells-us-about-jeremy.html>. Last access on 07.05.2015.

⁴⁸ I could not find the original source, but there are several references on Google for this Baldessari's statement. Some links, all accessed on 29.05.2015 for the last time: <http://www.thedreambeing.com/archives/tag/john-baldessari>, <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-baldessari-john.htm>, <http://hirshhorn.si.edu/collection/john-baldessari/>, <http://www.scienceguide.nl/200903/generating-phd%27s-in-the-arts.aspx>.

research as a disruptive practice: “Dillemath believes that research has to work against its own limitations. Research into the mechanisms of control has to be part of research itself” (Dillemath, 2011, pp. 226-227).

Neither art, nor research, intend to explain reality, or to fix it in any way and pass it through. The idea is much more of experimenting in one among many ways of being in the world and in context with others. Opposite to being alienated, it is about being constantly alert and inquiring in the attempt of understanding momentarily certain articulation. There isn’t, therefore, an imperious concern with discerning between truth and fantasy, separating reality from fiction. In the end it is not really what matters for artists neither for researchers, since the output is generally more interesting and rewarding as it hybridizes these two poles. To this respect I find relevant to mention the work of Walid Raad, who mixes fact and fiction in works of video, text-and-image projects and performative-lectures, showing that the narrative can re-created and augment the potential of the forms utilized by the artist, or the artist-researcher. On a New York Times review of a Raad’s exhibition in The Kitchen, in 2006, Roberta Smith writes that: “The ambiguity in Mr. Raad’s work can be profoundly disorienting, darkly amusing or just annoyingly contrived, like a new form of spirit photography. Adding to its ambiguity is a largely fictive framework, the Atlas Group, which Mr. Raad founded in 1999. The group supposedly oversees a vast archive about the Lebanese violence, but excepting a few actual collaborators on certain projects, Atlas is Mr. Raad”, and concludes that: “When Mr. Raad’s art is too arch, detached or text-dependent, as in the other photo-based pieces here, it seems frivolous. It doesn’t so much lack truthfulness, as gravity. Conversely, with the proper weight, veracity doesn’t matter: a larger reality, made of tragedy and farce, opens up” (Smith, 2006). All in all, there is no such thing as *a* reality or *a* truth to which unconditionally redeem. Even when it comes to culture and history, which culture is being convened, or which history is that being taught? In a 2012 exhibition in Magasin 3 in Stockholm, Ai Weiwei applies a similar strategy, as he “... by purpose delivers parts of the work story in order to obscure other parts – this inclusion/exclusion method could be seen as his artistic strategy”, considers Magnus Bærtås (2013, p. 110).

The constant interplay created between reality and fiction, for bringing on facts and inventions altogether, or for the creative montage of actual events, set up a new space of either creation or transformation for where unfolds the artistic. It is sort of a *third space*, after reality and fiction, ubiquitous in visual experiments and in textual narratives created by inquiring artists.

Although not self-defined as a storyteller, Henna-Riikka Halonen's research projects entangle with her practice in a way that resembles the possibility of that *third space*⁴⁹. The narrative, very experimental and anachronistic, is an important part on the way the work develops. Halonen makes up particular atmospheres suchlike the heterotopias of Lewis Carroll or David Lynch's proximity and remoteness interplay with the perceived reality, creating the ideal habitat for then "staging friction through fiction", as says Halonen: "The aim of my research is to approach the concept of staging friction through fiction as a strategy and starting point for artistic critical reflection. Here, an artistic practice is something that finds disagreement, discomfort and multiple viewpoints to be reflexive components of the work. This notion will be examined through fictions and objects previously executed by others, embedding them within present social and political changes" (Halonen, 2015, n/p). In her artistic practice we see the usage of methods, techniques and devices such as a constant pursuing of movement and wandering as way of being, which is quite interestingly mirrored in the adopted strategies of writing through which she approaches the concept of staging – or, in other words, the concept of her practice. This theme finds an interesting treatment with Halonen's work as it rehearses a way of formation of *other spaces*⁵⁰ in spaces she critically addresses in her practice and writing.

The point that I wanted to stress here is that as the immaterial capitalism of society of control took place over the previous disciplined society, and the role of the intellectual recalibrated from universalist abstract meta-narratives to the small scaled and more personal realities. More away from alienation and patronizing ideas, the dematerialized art could also attain these perspectives. The construction of complex narratives, from visual experimentation and textual reflexivity, are some examples that gain importance from the perspective of the auscultation of a field for artistic research. Art is not about explanation. Artistic research neither. In fact, the two deal with the propensity to complexification, regarded as a way to enrich a previous state and the conductor subject. This complexification is to be retrieved in the art making: "Basically I consider the work story to be an integral part of any artwork. First, it is a sequence of makings, a latent story of the processs that can be deducted or extracted from any artwork regardless of its medium. Secondly, as a meta-activity, the work story is aperformative and during the contingent and shifting orbit of its social existence, it aggregates meaning that becomes part of the artwork to which the story refers" (Bärtås, 2013, p. 106).

⁴⁹ Henna-Riikka Halonen is a visual artist and student of the doctoral programme of the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts – FAFA/KuvA, as well as part of the TAHTO research group from Helsinki.

⁵⁰ See Michel Foucault unrevised paper *Of other spaces: utopias and heterotopias*, written for a conference in 1967 and published after his death in 1984. This third space that I am mentioning is about the idea that artistic research creates space within spaces for the virtual emergence of a new knowledge. As if it could be about a space that was previously vague within university and is now occupied by artistic research.

These examples of narrative creation seem very a propos for they call on an immaterialized art, or on a *new materialism* of art as text, and on the content this carries out which allows inquiring about research intentions of the artist. Bringing on again Ai Weiwei exhibition in Magasin 3, Bårtås tells that part of the criticism Ai Weiwei received was due to the few information available on his exhibited work “World map” (2006-2009): “‘Is it made by underpaid farmers that had to move to the big city? Or did Ai Weiwei pay them decently, gave them fair working hours and installed air purifiers in the factory?’ In other words: there were important parts missing in the work story, she claimed – in this case it should include a sort of fair trade information. The demands of transparency in process based on ethical, legal and moral evaluations of the work’s credibility, points to the question of the artist’s need to take a standpoint regarding what work story he or she wanted to present. It seems that... World Map trigger[s] a need for a detailed work story due to the political situation to which they to a great extent refer” (Bårtås, 2013, p. 110). Current times seem to ask for more consumable information on the part of artworks, also as a sign of the *new materialism*. The public-ness of the artwork is a matter of interest to the public and of concern to the artist. When there is nowhere to go, in a stagnated height, like wandering in a city, reworking existing forms is likely to be undertaken. Furthermore, the complex narratives created in artistic research hold the duality: whereas they research, they also question the limits of research as an institutionalized practice.

Axioms and *productivitis*

Even though there might be other ways of ‘working together’ that do not obstruct criticality and transformative potential – like the pursuit of conflict consensus or of agonistic spaces (Mouffe, 2000) and the *uninvited outsider*⁵¹ (Miessen, 2010), the sense of togetherness has been put in such a way by contemporary society that makes it an easy target to be instrumentalized by the mechanisms of bio-power⁵². In the current economy these mechanisms are majorly handled by the private sector than by a public domain of a moribund Nation-State, contrary to when Michel Foucault defined his concept. This means that along the subjection of the participatory-collaborative-networking *ethos* to the sabotage of criticality, its *naïf* anti-authoritarianism and the promotion of self-precariousness, such ways-to-be are also irremediably linked to a politics of profit making that ever commands the private sector. To say

⁵¹ According to Miessen, “The uninvited outsider is someone who has a background within a particular (taught) discipline, but ventures out of his or her milieu and immediate professional context. Using a set of soft skills required elsewhere, he or she then applies them to found situations and problematics... it is precisely the fact that one is operating without one’s own professional boundaries that one can start to articulate concerns, views, and attitudes that go beyond the benefit of the individual or particular” (2010, pp. 192-193).

⁵² It concerns the set of regulatory practices of Modern State towards the regulation of their subjects and the behaviour of their bodies. Such practices are usually related to public health, but not exclusively.

this the other way round is perhaps more accurate: the flux of money that travelled from the private owners and invaded the public sphere has settled the market as the ruling force, removing from the State the possibility of decision-making. Bologna Agreement has made this quite clear in the performed re-organization of universities in Europe. If collaboration, togetherness, participation and communitarianism are instrumentalized concepts of the current post-fordist economy, it is partly due to the progressive disappearance of the public sphere in terms of decision-making.

Prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, private capital investment in the public sector was majorly applied in the acquisition of symbolic distinction, that is in the purchase of art or funding of art institutions and initiatives. Capital was applied to what the public sector offered artistic-wise, submitting to its set of rules in a quite balanced relationship. With the new demands of globalization and neoliberalism in the nineties, things started to change, “...and the public system started mimicking the private system. Phenomena such as the biennale being used as a ‘city marketing’ tool, the museum as a way to attract business, cultural organizations that needed to comply with new business-like efficiency standards, creative industries and the creative city inaugurated profound changes to the professional culture that runs the art world” (Steven ten Thijs, 2013, n/p). This of course leads to profound transformations on the role of institutions, led by this profit making tendency: museums today are entities that largely overpass the function of collecting and conserving works of art, assessed like the real business enterprises into which they have been transformed. The same goes with universities, which offer initiatives that far exceed what was beforehand expected from a higher education institution, and also public libraries have diversified and hybridized their activities becoming event hosting institutions. Even cities have been branded⁵³.

So, before 1989 a public sphere existed more or less independently of the market; after Berlin Wall collapsed, public sphere almost disappeared for the ascension of market as the governing force. Since then everything is ruled by capitalist interest, which ultimately means that there is no possibility of a true exteriority. Marginality has lost its possibility of existence, since no division between private and public can be retrieved and, therefore, no possibility of autonomy seems to exist. The discourses aiming for marginality and exteriority have to be revised, and it’s in this way that anti-authoritarianism is also very often putting at play in rather populist terms and without accounting its essential impossibility. The argument of anti-authoritarianism seems weak and so do the breaking of figures of power in the name of an idealized freedom. Furthermore, this is why it is no longer possible to aim for a true autonomy

⁵³ See the Behance content about the recently awarded brand Porto. for the city of Porto, by White Studio (2014).

in the artistic field. The hegemony of private sector allows, in the best cases, for a temporary autonomy, for periodical breakings, for local emancipations; it allows for a resistance that cannot be instrumentalized in the name of a never achievable freedom or permanent emancipation. The collaborative *ethos' raison d'être* has to be found in agonism, since consensus has also been privatized. The present circumstances no longer allow for such things as absolute independency, and thus the opposition to crystallization, or to unproductive stagnation, is the constant redefinition of subjectivities in order to hinder the seizing of individuals by such regulatory system. The permanent redefinition – or the redefinition as a state – has the flip side of self-precarisation. And so productivity has the flip side of *productivitis*.

In face of these tensions and dualities, a new intellectual propensity has been designed for the role of the artist. Artists have realized that it was important to explore what was there for art after the replacement of autonomy with the porosity acquired. This new intellectual is not only the result of such porosity, but he or she is a purposed subjectivity largely interested in the study of these new conditions. Indeed, aware of the crucial importance of subjectivities in the present context, the new intellectual is concerned with self-reflexivity and self-awareness. However, here's the flip side lurking. The artist-as-the-new-intellectual⁵⁴ has been manifest majorly in the publishing industry and events dedicated to knowledge production, such as seminars, symposia and lectures (in the advent of *new materialism*). The emergence of this new figure and the channels that were open as a consequence, have also given space to the outbreak of mediocre reflexivity, deployed in numberless publications where topics are approached in a very superficial and pointless way. It's the case where the production overpasses by far the consumption, and so the quality criteria are almost inexistent. Market rules and knowledge events business (large scale conferences, symposia, and editing houses) are a very profitable business. This is where *productivitis* takes place, in excuse of a productive intellectual subjectivity.

The signs of the increasingly powerful private sector in art are manifest. Steven ten Thije has mentioned a few of the instances: the sprouting number of biennales of art that are being held in almost every capital of the world is obnoxious, and can only be justified by the 'touristic attraction' concern, or the "city marketing" expression used by ten Thije (2013), which is particularly lucrative in a time when the literature about lifestyle, travelling and top cities for everything, surely enabled by easy geographical mobility and access assured by the high number of low cost flight companies operating, has met great impulse; and the business-like

⁵⁴ *The artist as public intellectual?*, edited by the Academy of Fine Arts of Vienna, 2008.

standards and procedures which invaded the art field and contaminated practices and conditioned aims; or the business world that imported artistic props to sell a more creative image, as in the cases of creative industries.

Creativity has been appropriated indiscriminately since companies have discovered it is a selling term. It also affected official documents intended at policy-making. Here, and due to a convergence of interests ranging from governmental funding and corporations' strategies, the way to present and to prospect artistic research is rarely neutral and too often instrumentalizes creativity, new immanent skills and expertise to disguise a profit oriented approach to research. Needless to say that these documents are not serving the purpose of truly transformative practices of artistic research and therefore ought to be taken cautiously and critically. An example among others of this commercial orientation, can be found in a look into the document *The importance of artistic research and its contributions to 'new knowledge' in creative Europe* (ELIA European League of Institutes of the Arts, 2008), where a link of artistic research to the European policy of generating "new knowledge" is made clear. Moreover, a section dedicated to "Employment" reads: "ELIA will, in collaboration with member institutions, explore employment opportunities of artists/researchers within and outside the creative industries and in other relevant professional sectors. It will also explore the potential for business creation and viability of commercial applications and processes to support research innovation and enterprise" (n/p). ELIA reinforces this positioning in a later text, dating from May 2011, and named *Releasing the Potential for Arts & Design Research in Europe - Proposals for the Future Research Programmes* (Corcoran & Wilson, 2011) where a very clear commitment into market is shared in the definition of art and design research (equivalent to artistic research, research in and through the arts, practice-based research, and others): "Our proposals build on the definition of artistic (or arts) research as defined by the British Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) that understands artistic (or arts) research & development as '... Original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artifacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction'" (n/p). This understanding was originally conveyed in an exercise commissioned by The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and dates from 1996. Tom Holert, referring to RAE, points out: "'New or substantially improved insights' as well as 'substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes' are the desired outcomes

of research, and the Research Assessment Exercise could not be more explicit about the compulsory ‘direct relevance to the needs of commerce and industry’” (Holert, 2009, p.7). What these scraps do is show that artistic research is in the core of conflict of epistemology, artistry, education policies and political strategies, all at the same time. As a result it generates very controversial and disparate opinions, being almost impossible to speak of artistic research in a linear way – a complete outline of the phenomenon will always request a very careful insight in all the scopes involved. ELIA’s 2011 document is a response to the European Green Paper of the same year (*From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding*), which focus on “innovation”, “industry-driven”, “excellence”: “We need to grasp these opportunities, build on our strengths and act swiftly and decisively to build our future, enhance the welfare of our citizens and secure the competitiveness of our businesses. Research and innovation are key drivers of this process, yet Europe is often outperformed by its competitors in these domains” (European Commission, 2011, p. 4). In this context art faces a huge challenge to discuss its place and the value of basic research under such decisive step in Europe into a common policy – one which expects equal performances by humanities, science and technology, without regards to their specificities. Moreover this is more or less the reasons for complaint on the theme of assessment policies in higher education funding politics. It is transversal to all areas to the point that some authors, like Charles Harrison, teaching in the UK, advise art to stay away from public funding (which is not public anymore, obiter): “Perhaps the point is that certain kinds of conversational and critical activity are vulnerable in ways that we are unwilling to acknowledge when funding is at stake” (Harrison, 2009, p. 139).

The force of the private sector is also manifest in the distortion of the potential of the desired self-awareness intended by the artist as the new intellectual. A huge amount of literature makes this concern manifest through misrepresentation, and stands itself as the evidence that knowledge and information have been treated as capital in the economy of knowledge production. A lot has been written, spoken about and published, and much money has flown at the propos of discussing artistic research. However no conclusions were achieved, and no solutions were found. In fact, the state of uncertainty of the hazy artistic research as favoured the bureaucratic and commercial apparatuses setup in the meanwhile, precisely to dedicate to the clarification and reinforcement of the phenomenon – or is it to control it? For this reason it is so important that artistic research occurs not without questioning its own limits.

In his explorations of power-knowledge relations, Michel Foucault has stated very acutely that power produces knowledge. In this sense, the similarities of the current art world with the current political state of affairs, and the emergence of artistic research in this context, kind of

damages its public image. Artistic research has therefore a demanding responsibility to claim for a more critical role for itself, otherwise being completely submersed and annihilated in such profit-making environment. The repercussions of being placed within a neoliberal context render artistic research to the risks of standardization and normalization to the requests of measurability and transparency also stressed by Bologna Agreement in the 2000s.

I have written, for a 2015 number of *Sisyphus – Journal of Education*⁵⁵, a text named *The Problem of Artistic Research* where I strived the argument that some of the aspects that are nowadays being perceived as problematic in the definition of this field are not really so, at least not for the sake of its critical pursuit. Following evidence of the great amount of literature published about artistic research roughly since the beginning of the twenty-first century, I've inquired the reason of such prolixity. One could say that it is due to a general but determined commitment of a large number of individuals, academies and associations, in coming to a clearer image of a field that for too long now is comfortably kept in a blurred state of uncertain boundaries, of unclear procedures and of plural goals. I've started to ask why a field whose first steps date from decades ago, back in the nineties, couldn't yet find a stabilized notion of itself, both in practical and in critical matters – a stabilization that would not endanger the necessary dynamics of criticality, it should be noted.

Artistic research is an extremely heterogeneous concept (that is why I prefer the designation of phenomenon), but, oddly enough, that fact does not prevent it to be treated as a disciplinary field – and, consequently, to establish as in respect to the requirements of a truly disciplinary field (in the next section I will give a renewed account on this establishment, also basing on data evidence). It is precisely this situation, of a formal installment without a synchronized epistemological development, which raised my personal criticism on the matter. Since departments were created in some academies hosting positions for artistic research, programmes developed under the name of artistic research, groups of people were formed for the discussion of artistic research, and publishing houses delivered books and journals round the clock on the topic(s) of artistic research. The result did not bring anything more conclusive than a bunch of vague hypothesis and repeated analysis, making the artistic research look far more complex than it actually needs to be. I started to look at the blurred condition and uncertainty of the field not as a problem, but as a *raison d'être*, and not simply as an idiosyncrasy, but as a critically informed strategy of resistance.

However, I doubted this was the underlying conscience of the inconclusive prolixity. The reason seems to be found right in the knowledge-as-commodity understanding: it appeared as

⁵⁵ More info on *Sisyphus* here: <http://revistas.rcaap.pt/sisyphus>. Last access on 29.05.2015.

if none of these entities dared to reach and present conclusions on the open questions of artistic research, regardless of their direction at aims, conditions, assessment, outcomes, motivations, methods or interests, for any concrete resolution on any of these aspects it would mean the final mark of a by now extensive full-operating organism of knowledge production. The knowledge that was – and, to a great part, still is – being produced did not aim for solution, but for reinforcement of the precarious situation of artistic research. Book after book, the following book would be a new perspective on the same issues or a declaration of the urgency to define the field, without ever really attempting at it. I came to the conclusion that the diagnostic of novelty directed at artistic research was not just a neutral take, but it was in fact an attempt to keep the situation in a state of pendency, uncertain enough to still welcome any efforts willing to talk and write about artistic research. Below is an extract of *The Problem of Artistic Research* to be published soon, which explores more accurately this enunciated situation:

“In a text about *Art and Method* (2009), Henk Slager describes artistic research as “a form of idiosyncratic research” in terms that seem to me not totally pacific. He says that “Fundamental aspects such as indefinability, heterogeneity, contingency, and relativity color the trajectory of artistic research. Therefore, artistic research should explicitly request tolerance, an open attitude, and the deployment of multiple models of interpretation” (p. 53). Slager’s report on a certain “indefinability” of artistic research is what I perceive as being impersonating a certain ingrowing state in its potential developments. The first battle of artistic research was implementation and acceptance as a field of knowledge; that can certainly be considered a battle won, but since disciplinary legitimization was achieved that the outcomes resulting from institutionalization appear to be stuck in the same kind of discussions from the early days. And to a large extent, these discussions are introduced with the idea of a ‘new’ and ‘emergent’ field, now and years ago.

In the preface of the proceedings of the pioneering symposium *Theatre and Dance Artist Doing Research in Practice*, held at the Theatre Academy in Helsinki in 1994, Pentti Paavolainen writes that “It is time to open up a forum for the writings that will spring up from the rather new but stimulating research activity” (1995, p. 6). This is as old as twenty years. Howsoever the situation today is that of also preparing a new kind of writing due to a renovated perspective on the way to perceive what in 1995 was taken as a “new research activity”. The author was careful on presenting the news: “The reader will meet devoted voices with a will to pursue a goal and readiness for the uncertainty

and unexpected which are both the true signs of a person who is doing art as well as research" (1995, p. 5). Moreover, then and now, "uncertainty" in this kind of research is a standing attribute, which makes Paavolainen's statement very timely even today. In the revised version of his paper presentation in Los Angeles in 2003, Timothy Emlyn Jones also stresses the novelty and hesitancy at stake. He says that "The subject of where and how research thinking sits in art and design is a large one on which, relatively speaking, we have only just begun; although even now it is possible to suggest that a new research paradigm for artistic production and art education is emerging. In this context any contribution to the debate has to be recognized as provisional and conditional since to date no comprehensive overview has yet been published". And he goes on: "... I tease out key issues emerging from my own experience and knowledge of the field – the only feasible terms of reference at such an early time in the development of the subject – which have taught me that, whatever else, there remains a great deal to be done" (2009, p. 31).

A very assertive Mika Hannula starts his intervention in Balkema & Slager's anthology *Artistic Research* (2004). He goes like: "Artistic research is a new area. It is a field within university studies that deserves to be called social innovation. Due to its freshness and newness, artistic research is both a possibility and a risk. However, so far it has proven to have a fair chance of survival. Thus, artistic research must be articulated and formed according to its own particular needs and challenges... What exactly is artistic research?" (p. 70). It is almost disturbing the highly perceptive and purposeful reading Hannula has undergone eleven years ago. This could have been said today: "Obviously, artistic research is an area which is yet to emerge as a full program. During the last 20 years, there have been different artistic research projects and experiments in various countries. However, there has not been enough internal scrutiny and definitely not enough fruitful comparison and constructive criticism among all the different approaches... Since artistic research has been accepted and established as credible research within art education and art institutions, we have to keep its possibilities open and move towards a vision of artistic research which is self-critical and self-reflexive. Put differently, we must have the courage to be anarchistic and experimental" (p. 70).

Awkwardly – or perhaps not -, already in 2013 the same Mika Hannula writes with the same discoverer spirit in *Artists as Researchers – A New Paradigm for Art Education in Europe*: "After going through all these seminars, all these meetings and all these late afternoons trying to stay awake, desperately searching to find the escaping energy to

focus and make sense of what artistic research could be or even should be? Was it worth it? Or: what is it good for – this emerging field of artistic research?” (2013, p.87). Examples and citations on the youth of the undefined field are many. Nordic Summer University group has published an anthology of essays in 2010, under the name *At the Intersection Between Art and Research – Practice-based Research in the Performing Arts*. The introduction, written by Sidsel Pape, accounts that “Practice Based Research (PBR), as an academic discipline predominantly practiced in the English-speaking world, is still new in the Nordic world” (2010, p.9).

In a revised paper presented in SHARE conference in 2011, under the name *Artistic Research in Performing Arts/The Body as a Medium of Institution*, Esa Kirkkopelto, while referring to the elaboration of criteria for assessment of research in universities, informs that “It seems to me at the present moment that it would not be difficult to agree on common criteria, to write down a list of principles. For sure, several lists of this kind already exist and they are also used for different purposes. Yet, at least here in Finland, we have also so far abstained from agreeing on such criteria, from hurrying with it - not only because of the fear of disagreement, but also because of the early stage of the development of the research field” (n/p).

Embryonic states will eventually evolve. In the meanwhile, I understand the pendency depicted in the assembled citations as being promoted by a discourse replete with forms of incompleteness, novelty, uncertainty, which ask for a solid structure before uncurling and flourish. This may give a fore explanation on the lethargy felt and why most of these texts (not necessarily the ones quoted, though) were found stuck and pendant in inconclusive epistemological, methodological and regulatory digressions. For their part, these discussions welcome the next discussion. As an attempt to solve the uncertainty, a new try is in print. And then another one. And so on. And in order to contextualize and legitimize the following attempts, departments and programmes are set up within graduate schools and universities. A conservative and self-feeding structure is the other reason for the state of pendency. In the sense that it drags money on either to publishing houses, conference organizers, universities through tuition fees and from public funding to research, the structure will be vigorously preserved by the most directly benefiting from it. Mick Wilson adverts: “The institutional imperative – to reproduce and conserve the institution – must not be overlooked. Educators, especially educators in self-proclaimed creative practices, are attracted to a vision of themselves as agents of dynamic change and critical renewal, as bearers of cultural values which are variously above the exchange system of the market place or connected to some

essential human and humanizing propensity. However, it is important to register the essentially conservative force of institutionalized education: education is a key apparatus in social reproduction.” (2009, p. 64). But is this self-feeding system a problem? In the path of European tendency of instrumentalization of public education and arts education, research creative potential is, of course, endangered. Imaginative speculation is thus ingrown, and what follows is the caricaturized image so often appropriated by the skeptical voyeurs of a “disciplining, homogenizing, restrictive, conformist, naïve” (Borgdorff, 2012, p.5) environment. But this misrepresented portrayal of artistic research is nevertheless about to change, or so indicate the most up-to-date discursive changes. Nonetheless and while it residually lasts, it cannot be accused of being unproductive. Sterile, perhaps, yet very productive in the neoliberal sense of “productivism – a compulsion to produce, to be sure, that not only pertains to the manufacture of objects, but also to the realm of discourse: ‘discursivity’ is easily exploited as a so-called alternative to ‘productivism’, when it is in fact anything but” (De Bare et al, 2006, p.7). So again one has to ask whether the state of pendency and sequent self-feeding structure are, *de facto*, problems. From what I see they are not to corporations, publishing houses, nor some university departments and positions and a fragile, worn and failed conception of artistic research, while they definitely are to foundational groups of artist researchers and artists engaged in research.

Robin Nelson’s anthology *Practice as Research in the Arts – Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, published as recently as 2013, is still not fully released from this ‘newness’ feeling on artistic research (or varying nomenclature, for instance ‘practice-as-research’). Some of its collected essays, such as Susanne Little’s and Veronica Baxter’s, still point out the novelty of research practices in the arts in their respective contexts. The introductory chapter starts by saying that “People engage in research from a variety of motives but, ultimately, the rigorous of sustained academic research are driven by a desire to address a problem, find things out, establish new insights. This drive is apparent in the arts throughout history, but it is relatively recently that it has been necessary to posit the notion of arts ‘Practice as Research’” (p. 3). This may, however, signal a changing pace. Along with the emergence of doctoral programmes explicitly dedicated to artistic research, this may hopefully suggest we are ready to surpass the pendency in which a raw and paralyzing novelty as pushed us into. After twenty years of generalized sterile literary ‘productivism’, a slight difference in discourse is thus regarded in full expectancy.

In the aforementioned publication of Balkema & Slager, Jan Kaila wrote that "Artistic research is also bound to a tradition external to itself because, so far, there are not many Doctors of Fine Arts around. This being the case, we are in the paradoxical situation that a large portion of the educators, supervisors and examiners involved do not have practical experience in the way artistic research functions, but are basing their thinking on traditional research or, in the best case, on a vision of what artistic research might ultimately be" (p. 66). It might have been the case in 2004. Now, in 2015, we have plenty of DAs and DFAs, PhDs in the arts and teachers of artistic research, so that an effective change is in the making. A change not conducted in the claim for "tolerance" (Slager, 2009, p. 53), but at the courageous step of becoming "anarchistic and experimental" (Hannula, 2004, p. 70) – "And I think we've passed this phase of determining what artistic research is... It is, it exists. It just simply is. And now we are more in the phase of exploring distinct ways people do and the effects that it has"⁵⁶." (Almeida, in press, n/p)

The excerpt ended with a small quotation of my interview to Leena Rouhiainen in Helsinki, which seems appropriate to extend now, at the respect of the prolixity of literature often falling into *productivism*:

CA: But what is the kind of expertise, for example, that comes out, or what is the object of study of artistic research? Because this is, for me, problematic in two ways. In the one side, I see artistic research related to practice and I think that is the desirable way for it to be. But on the other way, I've seen some examples, perhaps not so good examples, of artistic research falling in a kind of epistemological trap. It's like as if they are always trying to say what artistic research is and then this becomes the subject of artistic research, the object of study of artistic research itself. As if I turn into myself, and then I try to understand who I am, what I'm doing, and then I don't see around. If you really see artistic research as being connected to practice, because you have these two positions, I think one is desirable and one is not so interesting. But when I think of artistic research as a discipline, I sometimes fear that it can become this other example of epistemological trap. For example, imagine the discipline in a Faculty where the teacher or the students constantly deal with how should be

⁵⁶ Extract of the interview I conducted with Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy Helsinki. The entire edited transcription is in the "Annexes".

academic writing or what is artistic research, the rules of artistic research, criteria assessment... this kind of things.

LR: Exactly. These kinds of anthologies and books on artistic research are problematic exactly because of this reason. They don't go and explore what is done as artistic research. We have fifteen, twenty doctorates in artistic research. What is actually done there it's two pages that people reflect, comment upon their approach to artistic research. And then they go on about the actual project or process that they have been involved in. And, I think, we are a bit... we are past this phase of determining what artistic research is. It is. It exists. It just simply is. And now we are more in the phase of exploring distinct ways people do and the effects that it has. And it was, of course, important to have the co-realization of what artistic research is, in order to implement it on academic levels. The different organizations need an understanding, reasoning as to why to start funding or opening programs around it. But I think that phase is sort of over. And what we are actually producing, I think is a new field. People who come out from here are artistic researchers, they have a dual expertise and I think that their skills of articulation they are useful in the field in different... They are sort of multitask. They are artists, but they can work as curators, they can work as commenting experts, they can produce reflection on what's going on⁵⁷.

Despite Leena Rouhiainen says that we have surpassed the phase of establishing and trying to define the field, the novelty of it still acquires the force of a prophecy. A future yet to come will finally set the field in motion, but until now, experts are awfully busy trying to shed light in the roots of the field and in political framings, and no one seems entitled to break the gentlemen's agreement for the time being. These experts of artistic research very rarely are artists themselves, but purely theoreticians and police-makers, which can also be regarded as a reason for the verified detachment: "I think it [artistic research] is actually quite simple and the problem is that a lot of the writing that has been done on artistic research is writing by theorists. And we have an enormous lack in good examples and artists themselves should of course further the discourse on artistic research, and I hope they will be able to"⁵⁸. The situations comes to me as a version of the *Fable of the Roasted Pigs*, attributed to Gustavo F. J. Cirigliano and also known as *The sad story of Johnny Commonsense*⁵⁹. That or the wise lyrics of

⁵⁷ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy - TeaK. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

⁵⁸ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

⁵⁹ It starts as "One of the possible renderings of an old story on the origin of roast meat is this: Once upon a time a forest where some pigs lived caught on fire and all the pigs were roasted. Men, who at that time were in the habit of eating raw meat only,

Laurie Anderson's song *Only an expert* (Anderson, 2010), of which I leave here just a small extract that sounds quite appropriate for the problem of artistic research, as it has been treated in the hands of experts: "So who are these experts? Experts are usually self-appointed people or elected officials/ Or people skilled in sales techniques, trained or self-taught/ To focus on things that might be identified as problems./ Now sometimes these things are not actually problems./ But the expert is someone who studies the problem/ And tries to solve the problem./ The expert is someone who carries malpractice insurance./ Because often the solution becomes the problem./ Cause only an expert can deal with the problem./ Only an expert can deal with the problem/ Only an expert can deal with the problem".

"There is certainly more research being conducted nowadays", concludes Charles Harrison in James Elkins' *Artists with PhDs* (2009). "However", he continues, "I question whether Dr. Pilsbury [then Head of Research Policy at the Higher Education Funding Council in England] can feel entirely confident that the climate generated by the AHRB [Arts and Humanities Research Board] is also resulting in better research. I think that there is too much research. There are too many bad academic journals and too much bad material is being published. There is more than anyone can read, more than makes sense and more than can sustain reasonable, interesting, critical and intellectual value. What we now have is an effective system of institutional vanity publishing" (Harrison, 2009, p. 137).

Art in the knowledge-based polis, written by Tom Holert and published by e-flux in its third issue dating from 2009, is a good abridgment giving a flavour of how art practice can be perceived in view of a capitalist fabrication. Its ties to neoliberal policies render the artistic product as knowledge, which instantly replaces it within contexts that first did not belong to the art world. Besides the historical resistance Modernist artists have shown towards writing and intellectualization of art, for it risked art's autonomy, in the present-day artists' suspicion is also supported by the acknowledgement of the infiltrating and guiding powers of language, and how it is tied to knowledge production. Magnus Bårtås states that: "A similar poisoning is of course happening in our time, and now it is management language that is invading many spheres of the society, even private life and social relations. This is one of the immediate effects of the development of a global economy based on immaterial values, brainpower, knowledge-based industries, information technology, PR, services, and marketing. For universities, this often means that autonomy and independence in research are gradually replaced by the idea of usability of knowledge" (Bårtås, 2013, p. 112). In view of this, and also

tasted the roasted pigs and found them delicious. From that time on, whenever men wanted roast pork they set a forest on fire - until, of course, they found a new method. And the story I want to tell you is the story of what happened when an attempt was made to modify The System and establish a new one" (Cirigliano, 1961).

accounting Harrison's outflow, the mushrooming of events of artistic research has to be regarded through the capitalist lens. A critical note on the phenomenon cannot disregard the fact that the increasing number of publications and the well-paying international events organized around artistic research are an offspring of money for a set of entities. Publishing houses and press departments in universities and academies profit largely with the situation. Third cycle programmes are competing for students and the value in fees each one represents to help sustaining the structure of the study course. Beyond that, some of the flourishing programmes justify their profitable existence with the massive production of discursivity through endless speculative literature, then reinforced with the saleable products. No better image of knowledge as capital could be pictured for the background of artistic research. It is only in irony that *The problem of artistic research* (in press), portraits 'novelty as pendency' as a problem. With irony and with concern, since whereas originally it was not one, it may have become a real problem in the meanwhile for the public image of artistic research and obstructed the routes through each perform artistic research in a critical way. So my rhetoric question all the time was whether artistic research was facing a real problem for its blurred limits, or if it was just an imposed excuse by the knowledge economy to prompt more knowledge production approaching the situation. It is to this respect that the notion of "productivism" seems so a propos: "... a compulsion to produce, to be sure, that not only pertains to the manufacture of objects, but also to the realm of discourse: 'discursivity' is easily exploited as a so-called alternative to 'productivism', when it is in fact anything but" (De Baere et al, 2006, p.7). Despite Leena Rouhiainen identifies the same problem with the many publications on the field, her reported recent efforts undertaken by the University of the Arts in Helsinki, and other programmes in Europe, may be the kick-off for a changing of attitude in the field.

I've came across this term – *productivism* - in a book published by Revolver at the occasion of the event A.C.A.D.E.M.Y⁶⁰, in 2006. Although the project in which it was used is anchored in the academy, what is being envisaged here is the textual production that, since the installment of the politics of globalization, largely characterizes art making as a new materiality in the art world showcase.

As witnessed in Borgdorff's sources survey, the links of artistic research to the art world do not seem to be standing out as much as one would suppose. The fundamental connection to the art world should not be purely abstract and part of an incipient rhetoric. Being the main

⁶⁰ A.C.A.D.E.M.Y is a project that aims to explore and reflect upon the potential of the academy within society. It consists of a series of exhibitions, projects and events organized in collaboration between Siemens Arts Program, Kunstverein in Hamburg, the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College in London, the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven.

concern of artistic research the artistic outcome – “What does artistic research *yield* for art, in the artistic sense? Does it produce better, or different art? It is not enough to say: it does. Because if it does, how does it affect art?” (Wesseling, 2009, n/p) -, it is expected that something (something yet to be defined) is noticeable in the art making and artistic outcome as a consequence of research undertakings. Jeremiah Day puts it this way: “And at this point we have had much discussion but little demonstration, many good symposiums but few good exhibitions, thus risking that the whole thing could become another department of academia. Increasingly, discussions around ‘artistic research’ have the humorless and ahistorical tone of the social sciences” (Day, 2011, p. 19). I see the extent of Day’s concern. It’s about time to actually make artistic research, not just speak of artistic research. And it is about time that the reflection on the field is made by artist researchers, and not almost exclusively by theoreticians and pure academics. But the ties to the academy are pulling too much. Does this mean that artistic research cannot unfold beyond speculative debates? Is its audience in the art world or within the academic institution?

Fortunately things seem to be changing since some substantial efforts have been put into specific programmes which openly invite criticality and self-reflexivity for their own projects (part of which are certainly the efforts undertaken in Helsinki, the PhDArts programme and, for instance the renewed Swedish landscape with the recent hiring of Mick Wilson and Jan Kaila for different academies in the country).

ESTABLISHING

the phenomenon of artistic research as a field

The Conflict of the Faculties, authored by Henk Borgdorff, is an exemplary and comprehensive publication that attests the establishment of artistic research in the institutional framework of education. Having said this, the chapter that follows intends fundamentally to focus on particularities and contributions of two doctoral programmes visited in the course of this study, in Helsinki and in The Hague.

In the aftermath of a seminar on artistic research organized in Amsterdam – one of the earliest of a refreshed new wave that extends to the present-day – Jan Kaila and Henk Slager sat on a pub by one of the canals of the city and decided to establish EARN, the European Artistic Research Network. It was launched in 2004 in Helsinki with the joint efforts of Gertrud Sandqvist from Malmö Art Academy, John Aiken from Slade School of Art, Henk Slager from Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design, and Jan Kaila from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. According to Kaila, “[t]he operations of EARN got off to a good start, the network expanded and organized (and still organizes) seminars, symposiums and exhibitions. There was a constant risk in the network’s operation, however: the more general debate on the legitimacy of artistic research (how the new practice works, is it academically valid, etc., etc.) more often than not stole the limelight from the doctoral students’ research. In other words, the talk was about the form of the new discipline and the actual content was sidelined. This meant that there was a need of sorts for smaller-scale and more practically oriented international cooperation” (Kaila, 2013, p.10). The start of the network, and with it of a new European vision for artistic research, was sound and already conscious of the dangers of disregarding the work done on the field. It was 2004, but from that time until now, several publications and events with a “general debate on the legitimacy of artistic research” can be accounted. I will go into the “seminars, symposiums and exhibitions”, and other similar events, to set forth the establishment of the field of artistic research, as presaged by the establishment of the European Artistic Research Network.

The amount of literature mushrooming on the concerns of research in the arts, as well as the increasing number of events dedicated to discussions on the present obstacles, past intentions and methodologies, has been the great argument for the acceptance of artistic research as an established field. The registered events are the evidence that something is going on, and the phenomenon cannot be simply ignored when it has reached such high scale. As Leena

Rouhiainen declared in our interview “It is. It exists. It just simply is”. Artistic research was identified as a “paradigm in a loose sense”, by Henk Borgdorff, who justifies the acquired status in the visible institutional framework where it is embodied, and which, in turn, “... is underpinned by the following elements: (1) institutions and organisations that support the paradigm and afford it legitimacy; (2) publications in books and journals which explicate the paradigm’s basic principles and provide access to the research findings; (3) conferences in which cutting-edge developments within the paradigm are presented and discussed; (4) government bodies and funding agencies that support the paradigm through both formal and material means; (5) institutions of higher education which pass on the paradigm and initiate newcomers into it” (Borgdorff, 2012, p.110). The theme of artistic research has been made present in each and every of these elements, most often in superposition: programmes being funded by government bodies and publications derived from conferences. Broadly this corresponds to an economy of knowledge, and it very empirically positions artistic research within the gear of knowledge production. Moreover, the power relations need a field of knowledge to refer to, and at the same time there is no knowledge being produced without such power relations. Yet it is precisely due to its professedly compliance with such seemingly neoliberal educational policies and economic interests, that most criticism to the field arises, coming from artists and art discourse.

Directions vary, from more artistic scopes to more institutional concerns, but lists of the remarkable events addressing educational aspects in exhibitions and in artistic practice, the production of knowledge in art, or the academization of artists, all taken as orbital topics of the main ground of artistic research, are many and spread out. Tom Holert has mentioned a few in his *Unsentimental Education* (2010): “... there has lately been a massive and much-discussed surge of public or semi-public, nonaligned, temporary pedagogical event structures, such as Future Academy (London, roaming), United Nations Plaza (Berlin) and its sibling Night School (New York), the Mountain School of Arts (Los Angeles), the Manoa Free University (Vienna), and Universidad Nómada (Madrid). ... publications such as *Beyond Education: Kunst, Ausbildung, Arbeit und Ökonomie* (2005), *On Knowledge Production* (2008), and O'Neill and Wilson's own *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2010)... ‘education’ and ‘theory’ programs that have framed many recent biennials and art fairs. ... conferences, such as the Museum of Modern Art's 2009 ‘Transpedagogy: Contemporary Art and the Vehicles of Education’ and the two days of discussions at London's Hayward in April 2010...” (Holert, 2010, p.92). The chapter “Where are we today? The state of the art in artistic research” of Henk Borgdorff’s *The Conflict of the Faculties* (2012) also offers an interesting and detailed overview of the documentation

and fixation of the discussions on these topics, comprising governmental organizations, European networks, books, conferences, symposia, and reports on funding (pp.111-116). I have also compiled my own list of bibliographical references concerning the field of artistic research⁶¹, for which I focused on the first decade of the 2000s since it's the time when Bologna's impact has started to have effect and higher arts education has expressively embraced research. This list, comprising the period of 2000-2010, is intended not to be exhaustive but to provide a core set of the most significant authors and their publications for my own research, among which are, Hannula; Suoranta & Vadén (2005), Henk Borgdorff (2006; 2009), Jan Kaila (2006), Jan Verwoert (2006), Boris Groys (2008) and Anton Vidokle (2009) with books and articles. The compilations of Annette Balkema and Henk Slager (2004), Buckley & Conomos (2009), James Elkins (2009), Steven Henri Madoff (2009), Nilsson (2009), Biggs & Karlsson (2010) and Friberg; Parekh-Gaihede & Barton (2010) are also quite significant in content - as well as in number, since one of the things that abundantly characterizes the literature of the field are the many anthologies of essays and compilations of conference procedures, and, unfortunately more often than not, many are inconclusive. Anthologies are either published by an individual editor, or are produced in the interest of an academy or university, and sponsored by it. Research departments have increased notoriously their range frequency of publications, which is very much attached to the demands of knowledge productions by which these schools, their researchers and departments are assessed. Other titles must be added in the present, published after 2010, and which have been rather significant for my research as well – and to the amplitude of the field, I believe. Among this more recent add-ons have to be included Janneke Wesseling (2011), Ritterman; Bast & Mittelstraß (2011), Henk Slager (2012), Henk Borgdorff (2012), Robin Nelson (2013), Hannula; Kaila; Palmer & Sarje (2013) and a few very significant publications of most of which published by e-flux, are quite relevant, yet just too many to bring them here in the present circumstances. From this last bunch of publications post-2010, all except two are collections of essays of different authors versing on a variety of topics under what has been called by Annette Arlander as “the umbrella concept of artistic research” (2009). The platform of SHARE – Step-Change for Higher Arts Research and Education also offers a long list of bibliography on the theme⁶².

In the Portuguese context, artistic research as an openly addressed topic has been mainly explored in the Faculty of Fine Arts of University of Lisbon, in a series of publications its

⁶¹ To be published in *Sisyphus – Journal of Education* during 2015.

⁶² More info at <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/artistic-research-overview/bibliography> for a more extensive list. Last access on 13.05.2015.

research center CIEBA has been launching since 2010 that go with the name *Investigação em Arte* (in English, *Research in Arts*). It's trilingual (Portuguese, English and French) and the sixth volume is expected to come out in October 2015. Additionally some initiatives of relevance are registered in the Faculty of Fine Arts of University of Porto, through the activities of its Research Institute in Art, Design and Society – i2ADS, in particular of the sub-group dedicated to Arts Education (with events such as the *3rd Conference on Arts-Based Research and Artistic Research* (2015); *Conversations on Artistic Research* (2014); and a series of *Open Classes*), and some seminars of the Research Group in Art and Design.

This sample of bibliography is, of course, incomplete, and pretends to be a mix of what's been widely circulating as the main references, sprinkled with some of my personal choices. The "Bibliography" ending this dissertation will surely account for a more detailed view on sources and references.

Other significant breed of published material concerns the more political and bureaucratic examples, which comprise scrutinized information on the influence of the Bologna Process, reflections on general educational European policies and its consequences to art education, as well as official statements of many European academies and universities in relation to the changes occurred in higher arts-education, and, last but not least, law. These are all well documented and profusely mediated in essays and in official and corporate reports and position papers, easily accessible and ready to be read (*SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education*, 2014; *ELIA & SHARE Releasing the Potential for Arts & Design Research in Europe - Proposals for the Future Research Programmes*, signed by Corcoran, H. & Wilson, M., 2011; *Peer Power! The Future of Higher Arts Education in Europe*, 2009; *inter}artes: project The Artist-as-Citizen: European Publics and the European City*, 2009-2010; *Tapping into the Potential of Higher Arts Education in Europe*, 2008; *Higher Arts Education and the Creative Economy*, 2014). At stake in these documents is generally the internal assessment of the initiatives realized in universities and research centres, together with official positions towards political documentation (the European League of Institutes of the Arts and the European Association of Conservatoires have plenty of available documentation on their political views in ELIA's website). They are also the reason to be of an amount of societies and networks formalized in the meantime in the presupposed interest of artistic research: besides the already mentioned EARN – European Artistic Research Network⁶³ founded in 2004, are to be considered in the European context ELIA – European League of Institutes of the Arts⁶⁴,

⁶³ More info at: <http://www.artresearch.eu/index.php/about/> . Last access 13.05.2015.

⁶⁴ More info at: <http://www.elia-artschools.org/> . Last access on 14.05.2015.

operating since 1990; SAR – Society for Artistic Research⁶⁵, founded in 2010; and SHARE – Step-change for Higher Arts Research and Education (2010-2013)⁶⁶. Their activities include, beyond such documentation, the organization of international large-scale events and meetings where everything about the legitimacy of artistic research is discussed – and, fortunately, more and more the work of students and artist researchers are also included.

The seminar mentioned in the opening lines of this chapter, dedicated to artistic research and held in Amsterdam in 2003, may be quoted as an important starting point either for the epistemological development of the field, and for the establishment of influencing networks and relationships among people in the field. Sure there are previous events to be registered, there is a history going further back; but what this event in Amsterdam made possible was the renewal of the vision of artistic research, like a second wave whose fruits are beginning to appear. After this fortunate collaboration involving Kaila, Slager, Hannula and others, several initiatives took place as a direct consequence, and others were only made possible after the synergies deployed in the earlier events. Reporting to 2003, Jan Kaila tells how things have started to work back then: “Little by little, however, things started happening. Mika Hannula, the then Rector of the Academy [Finnish Academy of Fine Arts], had (and still has) a fabulous network of international contacts, and instead of keeping them to himself, he gave me a few leads that, as time would tell, proved to be golden”. This is when Henk Slager steps into a long time collaboration with the Helsinki based artist researchers and theoreticians of the field: “Soon, at Hannula’s invitation, a professor of artistic research from the Netherlands, Henk Slager – Super Henk as we called him back then – came on a visit to Helsinki. It was time for cooperation, or so we thought. Largely thanks to Slager, a broad international seminar on artistic research was organized that year in Amsterdam, where Tuomas Nevanlinna, a teacher from the Academy [Finnish Academy of Fine Arts], and myself also attended as guest speakers” (Kaila 2013, p.10). From this seminar resulted important guidelines and future plans to the development of the field, as well as a milestone and often quoted publication by Annette Balkema and Henk Slager, issued in 2004 through the L&B Series, under the name *Artistic Research* – a title as simple as only early days could allow for.

In 2005, Jan Kaila’s cooperation with Mika Hannula took a further step and originated a seminar in Gothenburg (Hannula was appointed professor there that year) for doctoral students of the Swedish University, as well as for Kaila’s PhD students from Helsinki. Soon after, Roger Palmer, a British professor from Leeds joined the collaboration between Kaila and Hannula, and during the period of 2005-2009 the trio organized seminars in the three cities

⁶⁵ More info at <http://www.societyforartisticresearch.org/>. Last access on 14.05.2015.

⁶⁶ More info at: <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/home>. Last access on 14.05.2015.

that aimed at presenting the research projects of artists enrolled in PhDs (Kaila, 2013, p.11) – in my argument, this concern with the work being developed in the field by artist researchers is of pivotal importance, and so gives these events an increased relevance. The last of those seminars, held in Harakka island in Helsinki in the year of 2009, gathered around thirty researchers from the three doctoral programmes, with the presentation of ten papers. The name of the event was *Everything but an Island*, and gave rise to the homonymous second issue of *Writings from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts* (2012) documenting four of those presentations: by Mick Wilson, Andy Broadey, Niclas Östlin and Petri Kaverma. At the date of the publication, Petri Kaverma and Niclas Östlin were still doing their PhD studies in Gothenburg and Helsinki, respectively, whereas Andy Broadey has completed his dissertation in Leeds in 2011.

Kaila, Palmer, and Hannula joint activities of Helsinki, Leeds and Gothenburg would give rise to a European project in the year after.

In earlier times, before the starting off reported by Jan Kaila, and which greatly contributed to the beginning of a leadership of Northern Europe in the following years in the conduction of artistic research, the remarkable events used to take place in the UK. In 2000, the University of Hertfordshire initiated Research into Practice, a biennial conference that lasted from 2000 to 2008 with the titles *The foundations of practice-based research*, 2000; *The concept of knowledge in art & design*, 2002; *The role of the artifact in art & design research*, 2004; *The role of context in art & design research*, 2006; and *The problem of interpretation in research in the visual and performing arts*, 2008. These events led to subsequent publications, where stand out names of influent authors in the Anglo-Saxon terrain of artistic research, such as Michael Biggs (who launched with Henrik Karlsson the widely cited *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* in 2011), Barbara Bolt, Tim O’Riley, Rita L. Irwin, Daniela Büchler, Graeme Sullivan, Stephen Scrivener and Nancy de Freitas). Documentation originated from this series proves the term “practice-based research” to be generally associated with the UK tradition. In contrast, it should not be used in a scholar environment in Continental Europe, such as the historic Leiden University, I was told: some theoretical pride could be hurt in view of practical research, and a dispatch to the technical university and applied humanities would be regarded by these scholars as a more appropriate ground for the practice advocates. Not that artistic research is the ideal terminology, however - and still in the Dutch context, Janneke Wesseling would prefer a thousand times to use “research in and through the arts” if it was not so extensive.

Other project taking place in the UK was PARIP - Practice as Research in Performance, at the University of Bristol, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board and coordinated by

Baz Kershaw. PARIP comprised three symposia occurred from 2001 to 2005. The themes addressed in the first edition are as topical as today: “i) What is practice as research? ii) Questioning practice as research in ‘live’ media (drama, theatre, dance) and ‘recording’ media (film, TV, video). Iii) Relating documentation, research practice and the performing media — how do we re/present practice AS research? iv) How the academic contexts of practice as research affect how it is pursued and evaluated”⁶⁷. The relevance was maintained also in the third issue, which opened itself as an international conference (whereas the first two editions were envisaging mostly the UK context).

In 2003 kicked off the project re:search - in and through the arts, a co-operation of the ELIA - European League of Institutes of the Arts, Universität der Künste Berlin and institutions from eight European countries: Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and the UK. The report describes the project as follows: “The re:search project, supported by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Education and Culture involved a survey developed in two distinct stages: first, an inventory of current national situations, drafted by partners, followed by a subsequent comparative overview based on English translations of the individual inventories, organising key data into semantic clusters using charts and tables”⁶⁸.

In the period after 2003, other events are worth be mentioned. The series Sensuous Knowledge, at the Bergen National Academy of the Arts, started off in 2004 *with Creating a Tradition*, and the following year with *Aesthetic Practice and Aesthetic Insight*. In the course of seven editions, the series has reached the year 2013 with *Ta(l)king Place* (and in between: *Developing a Discourse*, 2006; *Context, Concept, Creativity*, 2007; *Questioning Qualities*, 2008; *Reflection, Relevance, Responsibility*, 2009) and has conquered a place of relevance, not only in Northern Europe discursivity, but also in the general European rhetoric of artistic research. Sensuous Knowledge has this particular format where each participant is part of a small collaborative working group in which they remain for the duration of the conference, in the expectance of generating collaborative impetus and future collaboration: “... The few acclaimed keynote speeches in plenary sessions are inspiring backgrounds for the rigorous work in smaller groups where participants present their own artistic research projects. Here they are commented and discussed by peers. The conference's format is structured so that the groups remain the same throughout the whole conference enabling the discussions to develop and evolve”⁶⁹. The publication series deriving from Sensuous Knowledge is peer reviewed and directed at practitioners of the art field, “... presenting finished or ongoing artistic research

⁶⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip/symrep.htm>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁶⁸ Retrieved from http://www.elia-artschools.org/images/products/22/research_conference.pdf. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁶⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.khib.no/english/artistic-research/the-sensuous-knowledge-conference/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

projects of high and exemplary value, alternating with papers of the same high quality with analytical, theoretical, or didactic themes related to artistic research”⁷⁰. The importance of Sensuous Knowledge is even more increased if one considers that Norway does not offer, for the moment, any explicit doctorate in the arts. Bergen National Academy of the Arts has, however, since 2003, a seemingly equivalent programme that gathers students from several higher arts education institutions.

Starting in 2005 and extending until 2012 unfolded the series of conference & exhibition going on under the name Art of Research, held at Aalto University in Helsinki. A propos of the last edition, the event is presented as an exploration of “... the relations that can be constructed between making and critical reflections, and how these enable artistic and designerly practices to be characterized as art and design, or artistic or designerly research”, stressing the applicability of research – and ultimately fitting the interests of Aalto University, in itself more directed at applied arts than the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts - FAFA/KuvA, in comparison. The structure intertwined the discussions with an exhibition: “The elemental part of the conference was the exhibition that introduced varied forms of works related to the research contexts. The exhibition included video-art, installations, ceramic sculpture and paintings. The conference audience was able to see the exhibition works simultaneously with the presentations in the main conference space: Studio Stage”⁷¹. Art of Research “... attempted to seek ways in which artistic or design practices and research practices can converge, a convergence where the professional creative practices of art and design play an instrumental role in the conduct and dissemination of research”, as stated in the anthology that followed the seminar, *Reflections and Connections On the relationship between creative production and academic research* (2009), edited by Nithikul Nimkulrat and Tim O'Reily.

Continuing with the mapping of events dedicated to artistic research, a sample of the main occurrences between October 2008 and June 2009 is available at Borgdorff's *Conflict of the faculties* (2012, pp.113-114). Also at EARN website, a list of the events starting in 2008 organized by the network or with the involvement of any its members is at disposal⁷² - A *Certain Ma-Ness* in Amsterdam (2008); *State of Play* in Dublin (2008); *Becoming Bologna* in Venice (2009); *Epistemic Encounters* in Utrecht (2009); *Art Research: Public and Purposes; Re : Public*; and *Critique of Archival Reason*, the three in Dublin (2010); *The Academy Strikes Back* in Brussels (2010); *Tables of Thought* in Helsinki (2010); *Art as a Thinking Process* in Venice

⁷⁰ More info at <http://www.khib.no/norsk/kunstnerisk-utviklingsarbeid/publikasjoner/sensuous-knowledge-series/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁷¹ Retrieved from: <http://designresearch.aalto.fi/events/aor2014/index.html>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁷² More info here: <http://www.artresearch.eu/index.php/events/>, here: <http://www.artresearch.eu/index.php/events/conferences/>, here: <http://www.artresearch.eu/index.php/events/exhibitions/>, and here: <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/artistic-research-overview/bibliography#conferences>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

(2011); *Doing Research* in dOCUMENTA 13, Kassel (2012); *The Counter Order of Things* in Venice Biennale (2013); *Not Now! Now!* In Vienna (2013); *Radical Imagination* in Gothenburg (2013); *Thinking on Stage* in Dublin (2014), mixing conferences, workshops and exhibitions. In 2009, European Union accepted to fund a project submitted as a joint initiative of the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts (FAFA/KuvA), School of Fine Art of University of Leeds, Gothenburg University's Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Art, the Department of Community Relations and Development of the Finnish National Gallery, the Henry Moore Institute (HMI), the Project Space Leeds (PSL) and Gothenburg's main centre for contemporary art Göteborgs Konsthall. The name of the project is as promising as *Changing Identities and Contexts in the Arts: Artistic Research as the New Paradigm for the Arts* (known as CICA), and the intent was quite as ambitious as accurate in the core issue of identity: "The EU project Changing Identities and Contexts in the Arts: Artistic Research as the New Paradigm for the Arts aims to open up an intellectual dialogue over the changes taking place in the artist's identity and the creative potential it lends to society" (Sarje, 2013, p.15). This project led to a series of international seminars, workshops and exhibitions for the course of two years spread in the three cities basing the project, followed by the final seminar in Istanbul: *Changing Identities and Contexts in the Arts: Artistic Research as the New Paradigm for the Arts* (November 2010, Helsinki); *The Artist and the Paradox of History* (September 2011, Helsinki); *The Living Archive* (October 2011, Gothenburg); *Writing with Practice* (February 2012); *The Artist as Researcher* (March 2011, Leeds); *Foreign Exchange FOREX* (April 2012, Leeds); and *Staging Knowledge* (June 2012, Istanbul). A selection of the presentations are to be consulted in an anthology edited by Mika Hannula, Jan Kaila, Roger Palmer and Kimmo Sarje, *Artists as Researchers* (2013), published by the Academy of Fine Arts of Helsinki. Again the most remarkable aspect of the project, and also of the publication for making the topics available, is the focus on artistic research on the field, as it is being pursued by artists in academies. To access the works these students are developing in their doctoral studies is to access artistic research itself, without the mediation of a theoretician or a policymaker. I think it is exactly what Jan Kaila meant when he carefully self-reflected the role of EARN: to never lose sight of the content of artistic research (in opposition to the generalized discussion towards form): "... the more general debate on the legitimacy of artistic research (how the new practice works, is it academically valid, etc., etc.) more often than not stole the limelight from the doctoral students' research. In other words, the talk was about the form of the new discipline and the actual content was sidelined" (Kaila, 2013, p.10) – as previously quoted in the beginning of this chapter.

Other more recent events should be added: *Ice Breaking Fantasies Festival*, organized by TAHTO group in Helsinki in 2014; *Mind the Gap*⁷³ (2013) in Graz; *Loitering with Intent: A Feast of Research* (2014) in Stockholm; *Operation on the Open Heart* (2014) in Vienna; and *Unconditional Love* (2015) in London, the last four of the responsibility of Society for Artistic Research; *Unfixing Images, a discussion on imagery in the flux of political action* (2015) in The Hague; and *The non-human and the inhuman in performing arts: bodies, organisms and objects in conflict* (2015) in Helsinki. There could be mentioned others. I've chosen to refer events whose concern with artistic research was openly expressed, if only in the connection to the academic world all these maintain.

I am also making a reference to *Conversations on Artistic Research* (2014)⁷⁴, held in the Faculty of Fine Arts of University of Porto, and which I organized with the support of the Research Centre of Arts Education of iZADS - Research Institute in Art, Design and Society. It has a particular relevance, for it unveiled the tensions related to the subject in that specific context, and allowed the topic of artistic research to definitely enter the agenda of the school in Porto, where the seminar was hosted, and, at a personal level, it was fundamental for the prosecution of my own research interests. The keynote speakers of *Conversations* play important roles in the setting up of this investigation, especially Janneke Wesseling (NL), Jeremy Diggle (UK), Annette Arlander (FI) and Anita Seppä (FI).

Generally speaking, the countries where these kind of conferences and symposia happen more frequently are also the ones where are hosted the most well-known European Projects and programmes of studies. The set of trend makers comprises roughly the UK, Sweden, Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the Republic of Ireland and Finland, making Northern and Continental Europe the core centers of artistic research.

Switzerland is the headquarters of Society for Artistic Research. This society develops efforts in a politically oriented perspective of artistic research, and coordinates and maintains a very important platform for the distribution of outcomes that is the Research Catalogue - RC⁷⁵: an open access repository for members to present and store their projects of artistic research.

⁷³ From these events, especially *Mind the Gap!* seemed to have an acute approach to the issue of formats of presentation, in a very practical way, which is rare in such events, which often base their activity in rhetoric and discussion of the clashes of theory and practice. In turn, *Mind the Gap!* proposed an experiment in real time. It was organized in the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (KUG), and at the duration of the event six musicians conceived and played each their pieces live in a first moment, to present it afterwards in the internet – through the Research Catalogue (RCA) of SAR. The pieces should have been conceived in a way that the both contexts – live and the web - would allow for the aesthetic effects to unfold without prejudice. It put forth in a reflection on the conditions of reception and the ways to document work. Contained in this experiment is the question of “why shift to digital?”, likely to be made. After all RCA is a territory dominated by SAR, and so to question the interest behind such leap overpasses the reflexivity on documentation only to center in the questioning of power structures. Alike the academy, Society for Artistic Research has this twofold idiosyncrasy, a mission of trying to provide a space for creative endeavors whereas it is a space necessarily committed to institutional cutouts.

⁷⁴ More info at <http://conversations.nea.fba.up.pt/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁷⁵ More info at: <http://www.societyforartisticresearch.org/rc/research-catalogue/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

The Research Catalogue is associated with the Journal of Artistic Research⁷⁶, which in turn publishes some of the submissions of the Research Catalogue. Although SAR is based in Zurich, other countries join forces in these projects, since the normal rule in what concerns projects of artistic research in current Europe is ‘networking’.

Jan Kaila’s and Henk Slager’s project of EARN is evidence of the networking spirit: “EARN subsequently created a network for six doctoral research programmes, whose main function is to promote comparative cooperation within the area of artistic research for students and teachers through workshops and seminars” (Kaila, 2006, p.9). These programmes were soon to be joined by Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and National College of Art and Design in Dublin. As for in 2015, also Faculty of Arts and Design in Venice, College of Art and Design Sint-Lukas in Brussels, Valand Academy of Arts in Gothenburg, and Centre for Practice-led Research in the Art of University of Leeds, have become members of the network. Part of the function of these corporations is to produce materials of the kinds of those cited here: events, position papers and other publications; and these materials, in turn, reinforce the presence of the former corporations in the market economy. For a more in-depth overview of the current European doctoral programmes working in the area of artistic research, a visit to the compilation offered by SHARE platform is very insightful and helpful to orient in the fieldwork⁷⁷. Although in need of updates, especially in the descriptions of the mentioned programmes, it still is a purposeful starting point for a more personal development.

Still in regards to EARN, I would like to stress two important aspects about the network that should not go unnoticed, neither forgotten, in the flurry of similar events. First I’ve pointed out already in this text: EARN did mark maybe not the beginning of artistic research, but probably the re-perception of the phenomenon as it is being worked on in the present-day, and is therefore the outset for several efforts in Europe to comprehend and further develop it. The establishment of EARN originated not only important relationships among people and institutions, but also a number of events that have been decisive in the course artistic research has been going through. Second: EARN seems to have a conscience of artistic research that is keen on its artistic potential, in contrast to other resembling organizations, whose work is primarily concerned with politics and funding. This is the reason why I speak of a “re-perception”, or “refreshed wave”, rather than a continuation of the already existing phenomenon. When Leeds was included in the partnership Helsinki set with Gothenburg, Jan Kaila said: “But the goal of the cooperation remained unchanged: to organize events where the focus would be on the activities of doctoral students instead of on more general issues

⁷⁶ More info at <http://jar-online.net/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁷⁷ More info at <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/artistic-research-overview>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

related to artistic research” (Kaila, 2013, p.11). Although in this utterance Kaila was mentioning his collaboration with Mika Hannula and Roger Palmer (and, consequently, their universities), such statement can be applied to EARN’s way of thinking and proceeding, as well as to the majority of initiatives led by these agents from Nordic countries and Continental Europe. Whether they have been successful or not in exploring their particular perspective, it is too soon to find out, I am afraid. The point, however, is that by stressing their interest in this direction, they are also paving the way to an improved relation between the art field and that of research.

Authored essays topics vary, as do their form. Some are general ideas of artistic research (Slager, 2009; van Brummelen & de Haan, 2011; Kirkkopelto, 2011), some are contextual and historical reviews (Borgdorff, 2006; Wilson, 2009; Arlander, 2013), some focus on methodology (Arlander, 2008; Boomgaard, 2011; Sullivan, 2011; Lesage, 2013), some are case studies with emphasis on production (Arlander, 2010; Jacobs, 2011; van Brummelen & de Haan, 2014), some are institutional contextualization and disciplinary reflection (Arlander, 2009; Mottram, 2009; Jones, 2009; Harrison, 2009; Zijlmands, 2011; Wilson, 2012);, some are visual essays (Konrad, 2011; Mik, 2011; Van Snick, 2011; Kopelman, 2014), some are digressing on epistemology (Elkins, 2009; Nelson, 2013) or philosophy and cultural studies (Holert, 2009; van Wienkel, 2013; Alves, 2014; Groys, 2014; Rajchman, 2014; Wilson, 2014), and some others are more political and offer further opinions on the disciplined and disciplining nature of artistic research (Day, 2011; Dilleuth, 2011; Kok, 2011), and seen through the lens of European politics (*ArtFutures: Current Issues in Higher Arts Education*, 2010; *ArtFutures – Working with Contradictions*, 2014), while official documents allow for comparisons between countries and research centres, from which one is able to perceive the state of affairs of the administrative and technical aspects of artistic research.

There are also a few journals worth a look for publishing in artistic research, recently put to work and, again, resulting from cross-universities collaboration. Besides the mentioned Society for Artistic Research’s JAR - Journal of Artistic Research, operating since 2011 and currently in its seventh issue, also RUUKKU - Studies in Artistic Research, operating since 2013 and currently in the fourth issue, bases its content mostly in the Research Catalogue maintained by SAR. On the website it says: “RUUKKU is a multidisciplinary, multilingual, peer-reviewed journal on artistic research... [and] has opted for a publication policy that includes thematic issues, supplements with new initiatives for discussions, a section containing news and topical issues, as well as presentations of unpublished research in progress”⁷⁸. One of the accepted

⁷⁸ Retrieved from <http://ruukku-journal.fi/en/presentation>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

publishing languages is Finnish, a rule that captures the attention of artist researchers from Finland, and thus locates this particular journal in the way of Finnish's interests. Other important reference in the field the new PARSE⁷⁹ based in Gothenburg whose first issue dates from April 2015 (probably aimed at the replacement of Art Monitor, the Swedish Journal for Artistic Research, which was keen on research projects of staff and students of Gothenburg University, but ceased activity); MaHKUzine⁸⁰ was a reference in the field, especially directed to students of Utrecht School of Arts, but seems to have ceased publishing in 2011 with the issue 10. And the Glasgow based Art&Research⁸¹, which was issued with very in-depth essays, seems to have stopped in 2011. There are also other journals directed at specialties in dance and design. I could also mention Intellect, which is publishing proficiently in the areas of visual and performing arts, through journals, magazines and books, but since it is held by a publishing house, and not an academic endeavor, it is already slightly off my initial plan. In i2ADS in Porto, we have recently launched journal Derivas⁸², which although with a background in arts education, has a flexibility that allows for essays more centered on artistic practice and research.

After overviewing the discursivity produced on the phenomenon of artistic research, a realization that stands out is that not great attention is being given to the boundaries with contemporary artistic practice. Not many publishing has been undertaken specifically focused on idiosyncrasies of research done and voiced by artists themselves, except for the anthologies on the works of students some academies like the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts have issued. The focus I'm referring to is not Furthermore, the initial Borgdorff's scheme of 'paradigm portrayal' is noticeably leaving aside links to the artistic realm, turning artistic research into a mere academic field which, from my point of view, greatly impairs it. Artistic research as it *de facto* has been undertaken in establisher-centres⁸³ – or instituting centres, to slightly call on Esa Kirkkopelto's sense of "instituting" (2011) attributed to artistic research – yields valuable entanglements with the artistic field which are oblivious in Borgdorff's diagnosis. In the landscape of the study of artistic research it is missing a serious, continued and solid project aimed at the exploration of the influence – if any – of artistic research in the contemporary art practices and platforms of exhibition and distribution. The implementation of such a project requires a previous look at the field for surveying activities in progress, since

⁷⁹ More info at <http://www.parsejournal.com/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁸⁰ More info at http://www.mahku.nl/activities/publications_index.html. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁸¹ More info at <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v4n1/v4n1colophon.php>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁸² More info at <http://derivas.nea.fba.up.pt/>. Last access on 30.05.2015.

⁸³ By "establisher centres" I mean places where artistic research is being worked on, right now, without depending on the theoretical mediation of literature or events. I include in this category, for instance, the TAHTO group, the Finnish Academy of Fine Art, and the Theatre Academy, all in Helsinki, as well as the PhDArts in The Hague/Leiden. In these places artistic research is being theoretically, practically and critically addressed by the work of students and staff alike, *in loco*.

it is not advisable to multiply even more the already manifold inconclusive discursivity. In a brief probing of a possible state of the art of this enterprise, I found the project SHAPE – Artistic Research and the Institutional Impact⁸⁴, seemingly set in 2014, but so far without any published reports or made available outcomes, except a post from June: “Artistic Research shapes institutions, institutions shape Artistic Research, there is an impact in both directions. This endeavor seeks to investigate into this relation”. I would be interested in knowing more about their idea of “impact”, and to which institutions their efforts are directed at. If it is a case of looking at academies and universities, along with their related political struggles, then it is seen that many scattered *productivism* widely covers the focus. A view on how artistic research is relating to the art world would be another completely different thing howsoever. If there is anything left to be analysed and reflected upon in this area, it definitely must be tied to the artistic side of the phenomenon.

Besides a publishing in the Research Catalogue, which is labeled under that project SHAPE⁸⁵, no other information I could find about the project. Apart from a reference to its author, the Swiss Markus Schwander, I could not unveil anything more about SHAPE, not even who is leading the project and what is the current state of progress.

To a certain extent, I have the conviction that Society for Artistic Research was formed as an attempt, besides other aims, to elaborate on the gap separating artistic research and the practice of art. The “About” section of their website states that: “SAR promotes practices of artistic research as undertaken both in and outside academic institutions”⁸⁶, which enunciates the circumstance that could prompt the missing investigation I’ve been looking to. Also the fact that SAR is not structurally funded in a particular university or academy, neither is supported, to my knowledge, by an exclusive group of people or of institutions that could bring forth their own interests and, therefore, pervert the artistic aims of the Society, gives strength to the potential it could have (had). Despite their genuine concern in prompting development in the field of artistic research, the centralizing effects of being “the only society for artistic research”, with exclusive journal and archive, denotes a degree of centralism that, whereas not necessarily puts in question the intentions of the group, it certainly is liable to some misgiving.

But from theory to practice, the high expectations are prostrated. Membership is paid, and institutional partners are the usual suspects. Universities and academies from Continental and Nordic Europe are widely covered (represented cities include Oslo, Bergen, Graz, Vienna,

⁸⁴ More info at <https://institutionalimpact.wordpress.com/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁸⁵ More info at <http://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-person?person=100361>. Last access on 15.05.2015.

⁸⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.societyforartisticresearch.org/about/what-we-do/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

Zurich, Leiden, Stockholm, Gothenburg, Helsinki, Tallin, The Hague, Amsterdam, Ghent, Antwerp, London) in contrast to South and East Europe, almost not represented (except for Barcelona). The executive board members, elected in May 2015, are of clear scholar and institutional propensities, comprising teachers, consultants, advisors and theoreticians. Except for Anya Lewin and Leena Rouhiainen, no other has artistic background that can be perceived. Henk Borgdorff, the elected president, “... has published widely on the theoretical and political rationale of research in the arts”⁸⁷, but, to my knowledge, no artistic horizon is underway. Further in the “About” section becomes more obvious that SAR will hardly be the body filling the gap: “We facilitate co-operation and communication through conferences and meetings, and disseminate knowledge on artistic research practices and results”. Set in advance, “conferences”, “meetings” and “knowledge” determines the tone of SAR over artistic research without announcing neither promising anything out of the box and truly transformative. In fact, this way to proceed is more according to the last struggles waged by SAR, namely their 2013 public document to the revision of The Frascati Manual, where an appeal to the inclusion of artistic research is put forth⁸⁸. The appeal states that “[a]s the Frascati manual aims to reflect changes in the nature of contemporary R & D, the Executive Board of SAR would like to draw your attention to the rapid growth and dissemination of artistic research across funding agencies, universities, publications, international conferences and related fora. In order to update the Frascati manual so that it remains an accurate representation of contemporary R&D, we request that artistic research be included as a significant category”. Using the same arguments I’m using in this chapter as evidence of the formation of a disciplinary field, SAR is trying to portray artistic research as a valid, productive and *sui generis* field of research and development, in order to convince a board of members of OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (who author the Frascati Manual). Such interest in placing artistic research within the strategic vision of an international economic organization committed to the stimulation of economic progress, and to commerce through the formulation of standardizing good practices and common efforts, is not only problematic but actually asks for reflection. This is a matter of political rationale that cannot be exempted of a critical review – totally absent from SAR’s document, by the way -, and, in the present days, seems more and more drifting away from what could be a genuine enthusiasm of artists in artistic research.

⁸⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.societyforartisticresearch.org/about/executive-board/henk-borgdorff/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁸⁸ More info at http://www.societyforartisticresearch.org/fileadmin/autoren/pdf/SAR_Proposed_Revision_of_Frascati_Manual.pdf. Last access on 15.05.2015.

In any event, the RC - Research Catalogue and the JAR - Journal for Artistic Research, which are both in the basis of the formation of SAR, are worthy of an analysis on its own right. In fact, RC possesses the virtual capacity of storage artistic research as an outcome, since it expanded the usual format of text to also include video, sound and image. The effects this enlargement enable, not only to the documentation, but also to the very epistemology of artistic research – not least because the philosophy of knowledge in artistic research is very much related to the act of its documentation – deserve a committed study that goes through the extensive catalogue, in itself a very rich and diverse repository of what its contributors state as being artistic research. This could possibly entail a chance to contact with the more raw face of artistic research, since RC is not peer-review and, presumably, the authors are artist researchers. Leiden University published in 2014 *The Exposition of Artistic Research Publishing Art in Academia*, edited by Michael Schwab (chief editor of JAR) and Henk Borgdorff (current president of SAR), and whose focus was intended at the forms assumed by the outcomes of artistic research. Largely relying on the activities of JAR and RC, “This book attempts to question the still-dominant distribution of research between art (‘practice’) and writing (‘theory’) and to lay new foundations for a more considered approach” (Schwab & Borgdorff, 2014, p. 12). At stake is the idea of “exposition”, the name assigned to the space of publication in the platform of the Research Catalogue - which allows for a hybrid of text, image, video and sound and, to the conviction of the authors, also expands the approach to research in and through the arts. The Introduction reveals an awareness of the urgency to engage in an investigation more turned into the art field, despite cored in artistic research. The initiative of dedicating a volume to the topic of documentation reinforces even more the conscience of the fault in current literature. However, to my view, the authors deviate what is a topical issue to fields of institutional rationales and digress in epistemology: “With the notion of ‘exposition’, we wish to suggest an operator between art and writing. Although ‘exposition’ seems to comply with traditional metaphors of vision and illumination, it should not be taken to suggest the external exposure of practice to the light of rationality; rather, it is meant as the re-doubling of practice in order to artistically move from artistic ideas to epistemic claims” (Schwab & Borgdorff, 2014, p. 15). Whereas Michael Schwab and Henk Borgdorff conduct their exploration convicted that “[i]n order to understand how art may be perceived as academic writing, one needs to look at the purpose of academic writing rather than particular conventions of language (2014, p.18)”, I am for the other direction. If priority is given to “the purpose of academic writing”, the process of bringing art into the academy starts off as a submission, rather than as a negotiation. On the contrary, the focus should be put on the artistic procedures first, and only then in the inquiry of how to make them academic valid

outcomes. The section “Practising” – the third part of the book – might be slightly more insightful on that sense.

The recurrence to the repository of the Research Catalogue is more explicitly and further taken in the second section, “Publishing”, especially by the hands of Michael Schwab (Schwab & Borgdorff, 2014, pp.92-104).

Concerning technical aspects and in the interest of research itself, I highlight the necessity of RC improving its searching engine. Being an all-inclusive platform it grew quite freely in a wide range of directions, making it very difficult in the present to comprehend the extent of the database, and to optimize an incursion dedicated to a specific theme. After trying a few keywords in the “Works” section of Advanced Research, the results proved to be confusing, to say the least. For the optimization of a search undertaken by someone who does not know in advance what will find (in opposition to someone who is looking for a specific work that he or she knows of, or hopes to find in the repository), but is interested in a comprehensive overview of the existing production, the correct functioning of a system of keywords and tags is of utter importance. Whereas the Research Catalogue is not subject to any sort of quality review, the Journal for Artistic Research, on the other hand, is peer-reviewed. The website presents it as “... an international, online, Open Access and peer-reviewed journal for the identification, publication and dissemination of artistic research and its methodologies, from all arts disciplines. With the aim of displaying practice in a manner that respects artists' modes of presentation, JAR abandons the traditional journal article format and offers its contributors a dynamic online canvas where text can be woven together with image, audio and video. These research documents called ‘expositions’ provide a unique reading experience while fulfilling the expectations of scholarly dissemination”⁸⁹. The reason behind the expansion of media made in order to satisfy presupposed artists’ needs in what concerns the fixation of their research, is an aspect that this all-inclusivity in format offered by JAR invites for further thought. The concern to assure this variety, the reasons behind its need, and the results deriving from its effective usability in the RC, are all encompassing a complex object of study. As I see it, it could very well be a starting point to the absent bridge between artistic research and the art world, through the artists’ concerns on the documentation and distribution of their undertaken research. Why isn’t writing apparently enough to artists document their research? Why are writing tasks embodying the tension of the meeting of art and research? As said before, *The Exposition of Artistic Research Publishing Art in Academia* is pointing that course, if only the direction was decidedly targeting the artistic field as the ground for taking off.

⁸⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.societyforartisticresearch.org/jar/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

Accounting on the cited items of literature and events, the phenomenon of artistic research is not anymore a mirage, but it actually exists and is happening as this text unfolds. Despite its establishment, the general idea is that the phenomenon is still lacking a solid ground and a more audacious performance to transform it into a field in the interest of artistic pursuits, along with other more scholarly intents. As already mentioned a few times, this bridge between artistry and valid research is, perhaps, the literature that matters the most for a study concerned with the relation of artistic research with contemporary art. However, this is exactly where the huge body of writings in the area is weaker and more fragile – or absent.

Other aspects of artistic research have been well covered in the last fifteen years, but the intertwining between art world and what has been called artistic research is far less explored than its other anchor within educational sphere. What this eventually means is that the academic and institutionalized version of artistic research is widely fixed and standing out, in contrast to the artistic dimension, low-profile and still overshadowed. As a result it is not surprisingly that skepticism coming from the art world towards the field of artistic research arises, in what concerns the assurance of artistic intentions, against an empty landscape, uneven and unsupported argumentation on the importance of art making for a more complete notion of artistic research, in dramatic opposition to the overflow of information, very often excessive, on its institutional structure.

The most interesting part of literature to be consulted in the perspective of sketching relations between art practice and the pursuit of research projects, is that framed by doctoral programmes within an academy or university. Hereby it is to be found in publications launched by the schools themselves, and the interest of the content resides on its supposedly unmediated objects – unmediated by alienated views that only theoretically relate to artistic practice. Accordingly I have mentioned a few journals that have lent their existence to convey artistic research produced in higher education institutions where they hosted (Art Monitor, mAHKUzine, Ruukku, Art&Research, etc), but a great part is inactive these days. Furthermore, being a journal and aiming to place valid research, they still had to go through a peer-review system that unavoidably was not all inclusive and, to a certain extent, mediated partly the research documented – so materials are always to some extent mediated. In any way this represents a notable step into distribution and access of artistic research, facilitating the understanding of the field and an international discussion. This discussion is by no means aimed at standardization and at the elaboration of good practices – as fall into most of the political reports and official corporate documents -, but at a critical envisagement of the possibilities of the creation of an international community, in the interest of diversity, while at

the same time allowing for an in-depth and wide insight of the state of play of the phenomenon.

Nordic countries, and Helsinki in particular, have been very powerful in providing documentation on their achievements, struggles and history. Especially FAFA/KuvA and Teak are highly committed in an ongoing public discussion of their practices, making available the accomplished work of their students, as well as an in-progress research projects. Besides the large-scale initiatives in which their personnel is involved, these publications and smaller events are the ones really worth knowing for a more reliable idea of what is the current state of affairs. To this respect, the Finnish are exemplary and count with a number of publications where the focus is put on the academic routines of artistic research. The Finnish Academy of Fine Arts has published on how has been their process of formalization of the field of artistic research (Kantonen & Kaila, 2006), how is the programme structured, how is it seen through the eyes of the protagonists (Maria Hirvi-Ijäs, 2008; Kaila & Slager. 2012), what kind of works is being developed by the students, with real examples (Hannula; Kaila; Palmer & Sarje, 2013; Sarje & Wegelius, 2012; Kantonen & Kaila, 2006). FAFA/KuvA's publications generally present a light and engaging style of writing, which perfectly contributes to and highly increases the dissemination of their work. Sometimes the impression is as if they're selling a good brand: beautiful design in Nordic style, internal promotion, disclosure of internal history and emphasis on networking, the Finnish have decidedly won their stance in the international arena. Additionally to the carefully panned smaller events, they have a flair for large-scale and the spectacle: the Research Pavilion in the recent 56th Venice Biennale is but an evidence of that!⁹⁰ In order to propitiate my acquaintance on the vernacular rawness of artistic research, I have gone through databases of published dissertations of the Finnish University of the Arts. My idea was to expand my first-hand access and opinion in these almost-unmediated materials, also in account of some criticism (Nimkulrat, 2011). A difference worth of reference between the more artistic literature and the other more institutional-concerned, is that the first is available in raw mode, corresponding to the decisions of its authors (even if conditioned by institutional circumstances), while the second is largely mediated by the aforementioned networks, societies and their members, providing a look on politics that for the most part is not neutral. Here follows my overview in a seemingly report-style of the dissertations I've designated of artistic research, and which I found available at public open-access databases in Finland.

⁹⁰ More info at <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/research-pavilion>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

Research in higher arts education in Finland

Doctoral courses were introduced in Finland in the beginning of the 1980s, and the first doctorates in art were awarded in the beginning of the 90s. In 1991 the first Doctor of Art (DFA) in Finland graduated, a student from Aalto University School of Art, Design and Architecture. It was ten years after the programme was implemented. First DFA from Theatre Academy was awarded in 1999, out of the programme that started in 1988. In the early days, the interval between enrolling and graduating was visibly longer, but time separating the beginning and the completion of studies in doctoral level began to shorten in the late 90s. The Fine Arts Academy of University of the Arts introduced doctoral studies in 1997 and the first student presented the dissertation in 2001. With more post-graduate courses arising in different art universities and academies, the number of applicants increases as decreases the time spent on the completion of their studies. Generally, artists of the twenty-first century are definitely engaged with post-graduate studies and back at the academy, the Finnish in particular.

Nonetheless, Finland is not alone in this journey. The highlight is due to its pioneering spirit, but other northern countries follow close and attentively Finland's achievements. Sweden is offering PhD programmes in both Lund University and Gothenburg University. PhDs in art for students enrolled in the Malmö Art Academy are possible since 2002 (the first doctors came out in 2006) and are awarded by Lund University. Since 2010 that Lund also hosts a national research school in the arts, called Konstnärliga Forskarskolan, aiming for a productive and stimulating environment for artistic research in Sweden. Gothenburg and Lund universities, together with other seven higher education institutions, form this national research school. In Gothenburg University it is the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts that houses the doctoral courses. This Faculty currently aggregates Valand Academy (which merges four previous schools in 2012), HDK – School of Design and Crafts (resulting from two former schools) and the Academy of Music and Drama. Valand offers the options of doctor of philosophy and doctor of the arts. Norway is more hesitant and did not officially introduce PhD awards in artistic practice. The Norwegian government offers instead, since 2003, a third cycle programme – in the style of a graduate school - that leads to a diploma equivalent to PhD level.

What is most unique in the Finnish approach is the significance assigned to the creative and practical part of the dissertation. In Finland, PhDs and DFAs, as well as DAs, are regulated and prosecuted in distinctive forms. A 2009 report of the Academy of Finland (the most important funding institution for research in the arts in the country) on research in art and design in Finnish universities stressed that “[t]he doctoral degree at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts

differs from most other postgraduate degrees in art and artistic research in that the main element of the prepared demonstration of knowledge and skill is the production part, with 60–80 per cent of the demonstration's credits yielded by creative work" (Academy of Finland, 2009, p. 15). Finnish pioneering spirit is definitely brought into play in the way practice was and is envisaged in these postgraduate degrees. Jan Kaila, who was among the first batch of DFAs of the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts (1997-2002), states that "The starting points of our education were radical, perhaps even Utopian; we had no practical experience of where it would lead... Subsequent events have shown, however, that had the Academy stopped to consider and wait instead of charging ahead with speed and taking risks, doctoral training in the Academy would not today be an internationally recognized institution and trailblazer for art universities setting up doctoral programmes of their own" (2008, n/p).

Doctoral outcomes. Overview of the Finnish retrieved examples

For more advanced the artistic research matters are in Finland, there are still some confusing parameters in the kinds of doctoral outcomes; such disarray would benefit largely from a clearer organization, with improvements both in developmental level of the degrees as well as in its optimized accessibility. The task of going through databases and open repositories of doctoral research proved to be a topsy-turvy experience on a personal level. Setbacks are mostly due to a confluence of factors: variable and scattered information in a plurality of websites (TeaK, for instance, does not provide information on dissertations in the official website, but, instead, and for some intriguing-reason-beyond –my-understanding, written dissertations are downloadable in other platform, HELDA, that pertains to University of Helsinki; information on doctoral dissertations produced at Sibelius Academy is to be found in the recently set up homepage of University of the Arts, in the old Sibelius Academy website and also in their library database, although information is not always conformed in every place; Aalto University is providing information for doctoral final projects of School of Arts, Design and Architecture, both in their library website and in Reseda database, even though items are not 100% matching in both places; exceedingly fractionated categories qualifying doctoral outcomes (in Sibelius Academy, for example, this originates at least three groups of different classification of dissertations, which instead of helping the research, only makes it more confusing); abundance of information in some academies contrasting to very reduced serviceable data in other cases (despite the book store with a few items, no further information is to be found in regards to doctoral dissertations of the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts); obstacles stirred up by terminology and synonymy and translation difficulties (especially in the information available about particular works). These hindrances are identified from a

researcher's point of view, and mostly lay on the access and display of information. In that sense they are thus not related to the development *per se* of artistic research in Finnish universities; they are, at best, conditioning the understanding of Finnish organization of artistic research outcomes, since access to real cases and first hand materials are not immediately reachable or easily accessible, and thus appreciation and assessment runs the risk of relying in third party filtered opinions. In any event, and despite the remarks, materials are actually available, which is of course a priceless advantage. One only has to be persistent and attentive, so that results will eventually appear. If it is the case of a researcher's commitment, then it absolutely becomes a matter of perseverance.

Nonetheless, and beyond the question of accessibility, the mentioned fractionating predisposition deserves a more implicated review, since it is directly involved in generating kinds of dissertations, ranging from more theoretical to more creative ones. For a forthright discussion to take place I find important to ease, or even to disable, the aforementioned fractionating predisposition – it seems to be more in line with what's been perceived as a technocratic tendency towards the definition of artistic research. From the point of view of someone who is researching artistic research, that all-consuming exertion only adds confusion and unnecessary stratification, especially if one takes into account that the theoretical differentiation very rarely finds corresponding expression in final projects.

Sibelius Academy of University of the Arts, Helsinki

I have accessed circa 24 doctoral final projects by the Sibelius Academy, where 18 were submitted under the category of "doctoral dissertation", 5 are "artistic dissertations" and the remaining one is labeled as "applied project". Despite the kind of dissertation, each of these publications has a necessary written part, if not the whole of the dissertation, of the work load required to become a Doctor of Music in Sibelius Academy. When they enroll, doctoral students can choose one from three programmes: the Art Study Programme, Research Programme and the Development Study Programme. The emphasis of the Art Study Programme is put on the artistic dissertation, in which the written work is accompanied with concerts, recordings and/or compositions in the case of composition students. This creative part I regard as a necessary part of an artistic research work. The "doctoral dissertation" category I dealt with in the searching engine of the library of Sibelius Academy corresponds to the Research Programme, one that delivers a rather theoretical dissertation for its intents. Finally, the Development Study Programme, is presented in the old website of Sibelius Academy as such: "In the Development Study Programme, students complete a theoretical or performance specialization in a particular area of music. The degree has either an artistic or

scientific focus. The purpose is for students to acquire new skills that they can apply in their musical careers. Doctoral students develop into experts of their chosen field, producing new and tested methods, applications and practices. An integral part of the degree is the development study project, which can include concerts, recordings, compositions, notation publications, teaching demonstrations, learning material, equipment, software etc.”⁹¹.

It seems that this particular study seeks for a balanced approach between the theoretical and the artistic inputs. It is, at first sight, a not very clear purpose, given that already the Artistic Study Programme asks for a written part in which this balance could be easily practicable. The Development Study Programme also receives the name of “Applied Project Study Programme”, as evidenced in the library website, which may indicate a focus on the applicability of results. This applicability should be verified in concrete examples, otherwise and again what is left is the idea that such musical applicability could be enhanced in the artistic dissertation. Unless, of course, we are dealing with proposals of *luthiers* and other instrument makers, with technical stage improvements and other inputs differing from instrument playing. The one retrieved item of Applied Project from Sibelius Academy library is not sufficient in number to draw conclusions on what’s particular about this category. It is a dissertation defended by Sakari Löytty, in 2012, and goes with the name *People’s Church – People’s Music Contextualization of liturgical music in an African church*. It is an extensive document plenty of detailed information on liturgical music in Africa, ranging from contextual enrichments and more technical notes, whose aims were directed at producing new liturgical music in a Namibian church. Despite the consensual high quality of the work, I’d say it could still fit in the Artistic category of doctoral dissertations. It has a very solid background for the practical part, but then also the Artistic modality is, I think, flexible and receptive for this. On the other hand, it is the existence of an artistic outcome that prevents *People’s Church* to perfectly match the Research Programme modality. And what happens when a research is framed within more than one category?

Not infrequently, regulatory compulsion leaves blind spots suitable for exceptions. And such exceptions are sometimes in enough number to put into question the whole regulatory and categorized model. Across the Art Study Programme, Research Programme and the Development Study Programme many dubious labeling is occurring. Are these distinctions really mattering for the educational commitments both of the students and the institution? Are they resulting in diverse impulses for knowledge and meaning-making in musical research, or are they rather and instead knotting and time-catching? The distinction between a study on

⁹¹ More info at <http://www5.siba.fi/en/studies/doctoral-degrees/applying-as-a-full-time-student/development-study-programme>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

music and a study through music seems already fair and problematic enough so that any other parceling views are dispensable. It should be as simple as Löytty puts it in this final descriptive fragment of the abstract: “This research project consists of an ethnomusicological study, including a written report on the making of new liturgical music, and an artistic production named The Namibian Mass. The project combines artistic and scientific research methods, while the emphasis is scientific” (2012, p. 15). Why make it more complicated?

It is more and more evident that artistic research is so to the extent that it comprises a practical artistic component. It might look an expectable deduction but my commitment with this investigation is not to take for granted anything, so that conclusions come only after verification of first hand materials. All other third cycle final works are left out of the “umbrella concept of artistic research” (Annette Arlander, 2009), pertaining to some other scientific, humanist and technical valid possibilities. Beyond this rule, artistic research is very flexible. As long as practice is articulated with solid reflexive writing, the result is very likely to be acceptable. What is then at stake is no longer whether the work is artistic research or not, but much more how well it was conceived. The current survey is not concerned with quality, but rather with identifying valid assignments.

It does not seem desirable that an impetus of categorization would fall into areas of artistic research, as seems to indicate the aforementioned situation of Sibelius Academy – whose programmes, however, are not introduced as artistic research programmes. Considering that the name ‘artistic research’ is a quite recent terminology, the present review is also considering materials and procedures where can possibly be identified activity foci where artistic research is and was being developed without such label assigned.

There is a long tradition of the Sibelius Academy in awarding doctors in music, and it is, *de facto*, one of the biggest and most productive higher arts education institutions in Finland to this effect. According to SHARE network - Step-Change for Higher Arts Research and Education -, Sibelius awards an average of eight doctors of art *per year*⁹², and yet a close view to the database of eThesis renders slightly more impressive results: summing up the three doctoral dissertations’ categories (“doctoral dissertation”, “degree of doctor artistic study programme” and “degree of doctor applied project study programme”), in 2014 were awarded 13 doctoral students, 12 students in 2013, 9 in 2012, 6 in 2011, 8 in 2010, and 2 in 1990⁹³. If one attains only to the artistic dissertation then the numbers are, from 2010 to 2014, respectively 4, 2, 2, 3 and 5. This could be, to my understanding and at first sight, the number of artistic research

⁹² More info at <http://www.sharenetwork.eu/artistic-research-overview/finland>. Retrieved on 30.06.2015.

⁹³ These were one artistic dissertation and one research dissertation. The Development Study Programme appears for the first time in the database in 2001 with one student graduating.

dissertations produced in Sibelius Academy. But not all the outcomes of the Art Study Programme are to be considered artistic research outcomes, despite their artistic component. Going through the entire database, this is the overview of the category “degree of doctor artistic study programme”⁹⁴:

2014	5
2013	3
2012	2
2011	2
2010	4
2009	12
2008	5
2007	1
2006	3
2005	6
2004	1
2003	5
2002	3
2001	5
2000	3
1999	2
1998	1
1997	1
1996	2
1995	-
1994	1
1993	5
1992	-
1991	1
1990	1

As previously said, I was able to download and consult only 5 theses of the Artistic Programme from the total of 72 referenced, either because there was no file available, or because the available file was entirely written in Finnish. From the quite different approaches through which I could read, I wouldn't say that all of them are unproblematic examples of artistic research explorations. Artistic research comprises, in principle, certain operations that are not purely artistic neither completely theoretical. The specific articulation could be retrieved, for instance, in the dissertation of Tapio Tuomela, *Musical Interaction in Concertante Situations* (2014), which endorses a proficient articulation between his concerts and the investigation of the idea of interaction in three different levels of interest: soloist and orchestra, music and text, and music and moving images. The author is openly addressing artistic purposes and bases his exploration in artistic means. The remaining cases give raise to reflection in order to contribute to a more concise idea of the field of artistic research.

In general, music education courses slightly different paths of those of visual and other performing arts. It has a tradition of its own and not always is possible – or simple – to look for transversal subjects that cross all artistic disciplines. Musical education, to a large extent, is highly attached to skill and the development of that skill. Although exist, of course, studies that look at music from external perspectives, positioning the field socially, politically and seeking for pedagogical, therapeutic and historical accurate studies, most of the times the expertise in music is intimately related to the improvement of playing, concepts of interpretation and relations and improvements between players. Jarno Kukkonen's dissertation *Early Jazz-Rock. The Music of Miles Davis 1967-1972* (2005) is a document committed to analyze various aspects in great detail of Miles' music, tracing also his influence to the redefinition of jazz. Only

⁹⁴ Data retrieved in 11.03.2015 at the website <http://ethesis.siba.fi/>.

briefly is mentioned in the text (not in the “Abstract”, but in the “Background” part) that Kukkonen’s dissertation also includes five concerts in which he performed. I couldn’t find any attempt to articulate this part with the Miles Davis’ music analysis, which made me think that this study could be also placed as a doctoral dissertation kind of outcome. For the lack of information about the performances I am left to think that there is no explorative entanglement between text and practical part, which, in comparison to the domain of visual arts would lead to a situation quite improbable these days. While in the music field it is common the pursue of virtuosity and performance improvement guided by an artist model or legacy, in a visual arts dissertation it would be very unlikely to find one student trying to achieve a certain high degree of virtuosity by looking at works of other artists. This is one of the idiosyncrasies of music education that are visible in doctoral research works and diverge from other artistic fields.

The 2013 dissertation *What nature tells me: Semiosis, narrative, death and nature in Gustav Mahler's 'Der Abschied'*, by Matthew Whittall, is entirely textual reflexive in the idea of nature in Mahler’s work through a multifaceted analysis of his song “Der Abschied”. Why not labeled as doctoral dissertation then? For its side, *Pedalling Liszt’s works on the Modern Piano* (2014), by Mart Ernesaks, proposes an acoustical analysis of pedaling Liszt’s works, addressing the differences existing between pianos of his time and the modern pianos, and suggesting ways of filling the temporal gap and the resulting differences in sound from one instrument to the other. It combines historical reflection with empirical data and technical analysis of experimental recordings. Creativity is thus not employed in the creation of an artistic piece, but in the suggestion of valid alternatives to surpass the current difficulties in maintaining Liszt’s ideas of pedalling which were not obviously written having in mind the modern piano. I consider that creativity and artistic insights have to be convened for such an accomplishment. Javier Arrebola’s dissertation (2012) is about playing the entirety of Schubert’s finished sonatas for piano, and articulate those two years of concerts with a text document dedicated to Schubert’s unfinished sonatas. I was not able to access any of the parts, only the texts the author wrote as programme notes for the concerts, but his description sounds like what could be a good example of artistic research.

Thus, going back to the numbers shared in the table above, they do not accurately relate to artistic research, although corresponding to completed dissertations under the category of the Artistic Study Programme. So, whereas to include an artistic production part is a necessary condition to outcome artistic research, it is not enough *per se* if it does not exists an additional entanglement, direct or indirect, between the practical component and the written part of the dissertation. What happens is that according to Sibelius Academy regulation (Djupsjöbacka,

2011), even the dissertations produced in this programme can opt for an entirely written thesis, dispensing on the artistic part, if they are in the modality of composition studies, music education, music technology and arts management. Again the question arises: why to rely on these categories when they are overlapping so often and where exceptions subvert initial conditions all the time?

Sibelius Academy is involved in other doctoral schools besides DocMus⁹⁵ and MuTri⁹⁶. I have also consulted finished theses produced in The Finnish Doctoral Programme for Musical Research MuTo⁹⁷, operating since 2012. It functions as a networked doctoral school, combining efforts from seven universities: Sibelius Academy University of Arts Helsinki, University of Helsinki, University of Eastern Finland, University of Jyväskylä, University of Tampere, University of Turku and Abo Akademi. The homepage of the programme refers eleven finished dissertations, whose abstracts are available, and through which I read only to conclude that they look very competent works on areas such as musicology, ethnomusicology, pedagogy, biographical studies and history of music. Artistic research is not being mentioned neither practiced, since the dissertations emphasize theoretical frameworks and practical outcomes. Also the involvement of Sibelius Academy in the Graduate School of Music and Sound Research Pythagoras delivers no results eligible for artistic research. The 7 dissertations referenced on the website, finished in the period of 2001-2005, highlight technical and scientific interests already stressed in the network environment of the school: University of Jyväskylä, Department of Music; TKK Laboratory of Acoustics and Audio Signal Processing; TKK Telecommunications Software and Multimedia Laboratory; Sibelius Academy, Department of Doctoral Studies in Musical Performance and Research; Sibelius Academy, Department of Composition and Music Theory; University of Helsinki, Cognitive Brain Research Unit; University of Art and Design Helsinki, Media Lab.

Summarizing Sibelius activity in regards to artistic research, it matters to retain that despite the commitment with categorization, results do not always match the intended characteristics of each category. Even though there is not a unanimously officially stipulated definition of artistic research, I have chosen to consider for its basic identity – based on literature, conversations and also a personal opinion - that a creative part must exist in the whole of the

⁹⁵ "The DocMus doctoral school focuses on doctoral education for music performance research. It was founded in 2011 when the doctoral education for church music and composition and music theory were joined into the DocMus Department, which was founded in 1999". Retrieved from: <http://www5.siba.fi/en/studies/doctoral-degrees/doctoral-academy/docmus-doctoral-school>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

⁹⁶ "MuTri doctoral school is the central operational unit for scientific and artistic doctoral education. It is responsible for coordinating and administrating the faculty's doctoral education and research. It specifically aims to further develop joint doctoral education for the departments and the doctoral academy. The faculty's doctoral education takes place mostly through five departments (jazz, folk music, music education, music technology, and arts management)". Retrieved from: <http://www5.siba.fi/en/studies/doctoral-degrees/doctoral-academy/mutri-doctoral-school>. Last access on 30.05.2015.

⁹⁷ More info at: <http://www.muto.fi/en/web/453249/etusivu>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

dissertation, to which relates also a textual component. Every category falling out of this duality are, by principle, not eligible to be named after artistic research. I have collected 3 demonstrations of the activity of this field of knowledge in music specialization (2012, 2014, 2014). That makes 3/5, and applying this rule to the data of the table of Artistic Studies Programme, then 43 of 72 works referenced would be artistic research work. My statement is everything but scientific, only indicative, because no tendency can be verified empirically with so few examples.

University of Lapland

University of Lapland is one of the five university status higher art education institutions in Finland awarding Doctors of Art and Design through the Faculty of Art and Design. After reviewing theses published in the interval of 2005-2015 and made available in the Doria⁹⁸ database maintained by National Library of Finland, the conclusion is that Lapland University is not fully engaged in artistic research. I cannot tell whether it is not yet engaged for a question of time or, in the other hand, if it is sort of resisting the approximation to the developing field. I can only notice the awkward occurrence that in current times a university offering doctoral degrees in art and design is nowhere providing a reference or an introduction to their understanding of artistic research. That would be expectable not only to enlighten prospective students, but also to politically position the institution in face of such topical issue. Nevertheless the regulations on the making of dissertations that are displayed on the website of University of Lapland foresee the artistic component – which can even reach 50% of the total of the thesis. At the same time the law on university degrees (2004) is evoked to sustain the necessity of the written part of the dissertation in any event at third cycle levels. Reading through the descriptions on the website of University of Lapland, the found tone is science-supportive, emphasizing the academic goals as first goals in any doctoral degree, only then valuing artistic purposes. Particularly this last remark is inhibitive for artists looking for creative environments where they can engage in a reflexive inquiry over their work, which goes against a broader and more challenging outset for artistic research from artists' perspective. Nevertheless, from the 15 dissertations that I was able to consult (in most cases only the Abstract was in English, and two others I discarded for being completely in Finnish), 2 seemed to outline proposals matching artistic research⁹⁹, in the sense that combined a practical part with reflexive background, and their authors' aims seemed directed at artistic concerns. There

⁹⁸ It is a multi-institutional repository maintained by the National Library of Finland.

⁹⁹ Seija Ulkuniemi (2005) and Silja Nikula (2012).

was a third case that I could almost consider as well, but being a document written in Finnish in its entirety prevented me from being sure of my suspicion¹⁰⁰.

The reasons are different of those affecting Sibelius Academy, but still it seems right to say that in both cases is felt a gap between the theoretical institutional framework for the production of dissertations, and the reality of the achieved results.

Aalto University School of Art and Design, Helsinki

In what concerns higher arts education, the productivity of Sibelius Academy competes directly with the also very high rates of Aalto University. Officially they state that an average of nine new Doctors of Arts graduate from the School of Arts, Design and Architecture every year. By the end of 2014 around 130 doctoral students have accomplished the studies. Like Sibelius, Aalto University is an institution with long history. Operating since 1871, it has introduced “University” in its name in the 1970s, and the last third of the century has placed many changes in the structure and location of the school. In 1993 it was given the name University of Art and Design Helsinki, and only in 2007 the merge of University of Art and Design Helsinki, Helsinki University of Technology and Helsinki School of Economics gave shape to the new Aalto University. Three years later was founded the School of Art and Design and it was finally in 2012 that the School of Art and Design and the Department of Architecture of the School of Engineering have merged to form Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture, as it exists today. To become Doctor of Arts at the School of Art and Design has become possible in 1983, and the first doctoral dissertations took place at the beginning of the 1990s. The department of Architecture has its own history, with the first doctoral dissertation being defended in 1921. Aalto doctoral programme in Arts, Design and Architecture started in 2012, with the particularity of allowing an art or design production in the dissertation¹⁰¹ and the following departments took part: department of art, department of architecture (degree is Doctor of Science), department of design, department of media and the department of film, television and scenography.

My rummage among digital documentation on doctoral outcomes of School of Art, Design and Architecture was spanned into two different sources: the Aalto University Library archive and the Reseda database, where files are referenced but cannot be downloaded. The doctoral

¹⁰⁰ Kalle Lampela (2012).

¹⁰¹ Accessed in 30.06.2015, their website <https://into.aalto.fi/display/enddoctoraltaik/Dissertation+and+Graduation> says: “In the field of art and design, a dissertation can also include an art production, a series of art productions meaningfully connected to each other, or a product development project. A written thesis forming a part of the dissertation has to be in a dialogic and analytic relation to the art productions or product development project, and the doctoral candidate has to present in it the targets, methods and findings of the production, series of productions or product development project. Dissertation can include artistic parts, which can be joint productions or projects, provided that the independent contribution of the doctoral candidate can be clearly indicated. The art productions may only be new works. The written thesis must be suitable for publication”. This leaves space for entirely written doctoral dissertations.

dissertations collection in Aalto library reaches 57 results in the sub-group Taiteiden ja suunnit korkeakoulu/ARTS (the automatic translation is “arts and planning of higher education”). In order to refine my search I checked the keyword “Visual Arts”, and ended with 8 results from the period 2009-2015. The remaining items were distributed associated with keywords such as design (28 items), art education (16 items), education (5 items), participatory design (5 items), visual culture (5 items), communication (4 items) and others. After downloading all the 8 items and reading enough to elaborate an opinion on the nature of the content, I ended with two examples fitting my artistic research idea. Not surprisingly they are both dated from after 2012, following the special feature of the practical part of the dissertation introduced in that year. The author of the earlier example from 2013 is Tapio Tuominen, and the title is *Maaginen Kuva. Rituaalinen Käyttäytyminen Kuvataiteessa* (in English: *A magical picture – ritualistic behavior in visual arts*). My assumption is, however, based on the English abstract¹⁰², given that the rest of the document is in the author’s mother tongue. In 2015 there is the thesis *Parallel Worlds. Art and Sport in Contemporary Culture*, authored by Matti Tainio, whose endeavor also offers an interesting entanglement between artistic and theoretical demarches¹⁰³. A third promising item by Jaana Houessou, dating from as early as 2010, was on the row with the title *Teoksen Synty. kuvataiteellista prosessia sanallista massa* (automatically generated translation is *The birth of work. image artistic process verbal mass*) but the entirety of its text written in Finnish became an insurmountable obstacle for my clear conclusion on its regards.

Reseda database showed almost the double of results available in the Aalto University Library, from which three thirds are still in progress. Given that the files in this database are not downloadable, I have based my exam in the abstracts only – and not all of the references

¹⁰² An extract of Tapio Tuominen’s dissertation abstract: “This study explores ritualistic behavior during the creation of visual artworks. The hypothesis was that the creation of visual artworks falls within the sphere of ritualistic behavior. The study asked what emotions an artist experiences during creative activities and in what forms ritualistic behaviors manifest themselves in art and artistic work. The study explores these questions through the author’s own artistic work and experiences gained from the world of visual arts. A belief that it is difficult to experience something without making pictures yourself has led the author to selecting his own artistic work as one of the channels through which information was collected. The aim was to figure out what happens in an artist’s mind when creating art by observing and writing down what is experienced during the creation of the artistic work. For the purposes of this study, artistic work includes the actual making of a picture as well as the related preparations and the subsequent exhibitions. The artistic work was divided into two parts - drawing and painting. A series of pictures was drawn for an exhibition held at the Lönnerström Art Museum in 2004 and a series of paintings were completed and displayed at Galleria Huuto that same year.”. Independently from the results achieved, the methodologies applied or the quality of the development, what matters here is to stress the intention of the author to undertake an artistic research study.

¹⁰³ An extract of Matti Tainio’s dissertation abstract: “This research maps the relationships between art and sport through various perspectives using a multidisciplinary approach. In addition, three artistic projects have been included in the research. The research produces a reasoned proposition why art and sport should be seen similar practices in contemporary culture and why this perspective is beneficial. In everyday view art and sport seem opposite cultural practices, but by adopting an appropriate view similarities can be detected. In order to eliminate these superficial differences the research examines art and sport as cultural practices. The cultural practices of art and sport are analyzed from various points of view including cultural history, social structure and philosophical aesthetics. The special focus is on artist’s and athlete’s viewpoints to the practices. The artistic projects provide an additional perspective to the relationship of art and sport. (...)The art projects that form a part of the research continue the established tradition of artistic research by exploring and commenting on the subject of the study using artistic methods.”. This more recent example even interestingly mentions a “tradition of artistic research”.

included an abstract, handicapping the appreciation which could only rely on the titles. In some of the cases not even in original titles, but in automatically translated titles from Finnish to English. From the set outstood the abstracts of Riika Mäkikoskela and Heidi Fast, respectively titled *Idean, keinojen ja lopputuloksen suhde kolmiulotteisessa kuvataiteellisessa työskentelyssä* (in English *Relation between idea, means and end in three dimensional art making*¹⁰⁴) and *Sensibiliteetti ja laulun lumo. Laulun lumovoimaan perustuvan taiteellisen menetelmän kehittäminen semiokapitalismin oloissa* (in English *Sensibility and the Fascinance of Singing. Development of an Artistic Practice Based on the Affectivity of Singing in the Conditions of Semiocapitalism*¹⁰⁵). Heidi Fast, supervised by the pioneering artist researcher Teemu Mäki (a reference in visual arts and pedagogy in Finland, and one of the first doctorates in art in the country), emphasizes in her abstract the increased chances of exploring and developing new tools through artistic research. Riikka Mäkikoskela is definitely into it, as proven by the first period of her introductory text: “My experiences of three dimensional art making constitute the base from which the main question of my dissertation has arisen, therefore I’m doing artistic research”. Therefore she is an artist researcher.

What one can anticipate from the abstract of *Transforming tradition for sustainability*, by Adhi Nugraha, could, at first glance, mislead to an artistic research endeavor. The author calls very clearly on his practitioner skills, “Positioning myself as a practitioner and a researcher, I made use my own design practices as a main vehicle for generating knowledge”, and combines them with a social and cultural concern which is expected to be explored more in depth later.

However, after further reflection on the limited information at disposal in the two paragraphs of abstract, the conclusion is that this investigation is located in some other area that is not artistic research. Perhaps it suits design research better in the sense it openly seeks for applicability of the results: “The expected outcome of this research is a model 'transformation of tradition', and a recommendation for art-design educational institutions, practitioners, related industries and government”. A more speculative and open-ended attitude is ideally associated with artistic research projects. There is one last example whose contents made me

¹⁰⁴ An extract of Riikka Mäkikoskela’s dissertation abstract: “My experiences of three dimensional art making constitute the base from which the main question of my dissertation has arisen, therefore I’m doing artistic research. My aim is to focus on maker’s point of view, and my dissertation will be a basic research on sculpture. In my opinion, both artistic practice and research is to think and question through making. I’m examining phenomenologically the process of three dimensional art making. My dissertation will consist of three production parts, exhibitions, and the text. (...)From the field of sculpture I’m using the art works and texts by Tony Cragg and Robert Morris as research documents. While studying their works and texts I’m also working on my own pieces and writing my own text. My process of art making produces the main research material”.

¹⁰⁵ An extract of Heidi Fast’s dissertation abstract: “At the basis of this artistic research project is the thesis of the changes of sensitivity (ability to sensitize) and sensibility (ability to relate to others) in the conditions of current semiocapitalism, and especially the non-conceptual nature of this process. (...) Artistic research enables for exploring and developing new tools to deal with this a-signifying level process sensually, affectively and embodiedly in practice. (...)The main aim of the project is to develop an artistic method based on the attuning possibility of voice resulting in Hospital Symphonies –artistic production in co-operation with HYKS Psychiatric Centrum, Helsinki. Experiment consist of co-poietic artistic workshop-process with the participants (outpatients suffering from somatoformic and eating disorders) (2014) and three main artworks of the research-experiment (carried out in 2013, 2014 and 2016). The research project results in artistic thesis in 2016.”

hesitate for a while. It is the abstract of the thesis of Petteri Ikonen, dating from as far as 2004, and titled *Arjen trilogia. Korutaide taiteen tekemisen ja kokemisen välineenä* (in English *Trilogy of Everyday Life. The jewelry as a means of making and experiencing art*). In fact the study seems to indicate good prospects for an understandable activity known as artistic research – and note that is more than 10 years-old now, from a time when Aalto University was not yet called Aalto University! -, wisely invoking the creative part of the research, but without ever neglecting the framework and theoretical support this practical dimension needs. It seems to me, however, very attached to the area of design - and it is, in fact, since it deals with jewelry. However, since it does not cling to design expertise with limiting consequences, as it would be in the case of a demand for execution models, or other kinds of applicability, I believe that this can be an interesting precursor case of artistic research. The most distinctive aspect of it is, I would say, its apparent concern with a reflective body. Unfortunately the inaccessibility of the main body of the work prevents the verification and strengthening of these conjectures.

The universe of my search across Reseda database was drastically decreased from 96 entries to 14 entries as soon as I checked the research area of “fine arts/applied arts” within the collection of the Department of Art. This may be a controversial choice, but only until a certain point. It is truth that it resulted in apparently reducing a wider universe of artistic research to research done exclusively in the particular areas of fine arts and applied arts, leaving aside, hypothetically, other areas such as performing arts, music or photography. And according to previous examples mentioned, I’m considering, although cautiously, musical examples in this investigation so far. Following the same logics it would be natural then to consider the excluded areas as well, but: Aalto is not offering musical higher education; photography is not attached to the collection of the department of art, but mostly corresponds to work developed in the department of media which, *per se*, makes me think the goals are differing from those that would be pursued in an art department; performing arts are not part of Aalto’s range of doctoral studies. To make it clear, this is the list of the excluded research areas in consequence of my choice for “fine arts/applied arts”: Aesthetics/Philosophy of art, Architecture/Spatial design, Art education and media literacy, Communication studies, Cultural design research, Design, Digital application design and implementation, Digital cultural heritage, Digital culture and society, Environment studies/Ecology, Film and television studies, Futures studies, Gender studies, Graphic design, Interactive storytelling, Learning environments, Photography, Scenography, Production, set and costume design, Semiotics, Textile art/Clothing design, Visual culture, Visual knowledge building. Unless the research outcomes are mislabeled, I don’t think any of these areas is expectedly suiting artistic research more than Fine Arts/Applied Arts. “Applied Arts” is ultimately responsible for most of the design related examples. In any

case, and so that doubts wouldn't persist, I decided to go through the 33 references of the research area "Photography" only to find out one sole arguably case of artistic research. It is the work of Harri Pälviranta, published in 2012, whose title is *Toden tuntua galleriassa – Väkiäältä käsittelevän dokumentaarisen valokuvataiteen merkityksellistäminen näyttelykontekstissa* (in English *Experiencing reality in an art exhibition – Encountering violence-related documentary photographic art in a gallery context*¹⁰⁶). Even though I might be repeating myself, I would like to underline the fact that I am basing my appreciation in English abstract information which, in many cases, risks to be inconclusive or rather dubious. From these 33 items only a few more than a half were titled in English, and only 9 included an English abstract – and most of the times, a very laconic one.

TeaK - Theatre Academy of University of the Arts, Helsinki

In Finland, doctoral education in theatre and dance is provisioned by Theatre Academy (TeaK). Their digital theses archive is kept by the University of Helsinki in HELDA platform. For some reason beyond my understanding, TeaK is a partner institution of this repository, and therefore one can download full text dissertations published through the series Acta Scenica for the research done at Theatre Academy. I have downloaded 8 examples, from the period of 2001 to 2014. For obvious reasons I have downloaded only those written in English. I am particularly interested in probing whether there are major differences between works done before and after 2007. This is the year when the Department of Research Development was created in TeaK, as well as its research centre Tutke¹⁰⁷, and was also an year for reshaping the doctorate created earlier in 1988 (with the first graduation in 1999).

From the 8 scrutinized works downloaded from HELDA, the dissertations authored by Betsy Fisher and Maya Tängeberg-Grischim are both enhancing artistic concerns with further critical thought and contextual understanding of the practice. Betsy Fisher is somewhat breaking ground in 2002 proposing a study where she elaborates on the whole process of realization of two dance-choreographies. She describes chronologically every step of the process and, by

¹⁰⁶ An extract of Harri Pälviranta's dissertation abstract: "The study is twofold in character. First of all, it includes vast artistic production. This means that as part of this research project, I myself have produced three different projects, namely Battered (2007), Playing Belfast (2009), and Notes on Finnish Gun Culture (2010). All thematically touch upon issues of violence, whether structural and/or apparent, and the approach is documentary. Battered looks into the physical assaults that take place in public spaces; Playing Belfast discusses children's relationship to the bygone Northern Ireland conflict, The Troubles; and Notes on Finnish Gun Culture is a four-chapter narrative on various dimensions of gun use and shooting practices. All have been widely exhibited in Finland and internationally. During the research period, in six years pictures from these series have been included in 42 exhibitions in 17 countries. (...) Secondly, I have conducted a study on the reception given the Battered and Notes on Finnish Gun Culture series. Within this phase, my focus has been on finding out what kinds of meanings viewers give to the artworks from these two series and the extent to which their responses reflect an awareness that the works convey documentary discourse as well as the role that violence plays in the signification process. In line with these responses, an important question was: How do the artist and viewer's perspectives of the artworks and significations relate to each other? Articulations of viewer interpretations have been gathered through questionnaires (n = 226) and interviews (n = 8) in connection with seven solo shows (five in Finland, one in Denmark and one in Spain)".

¹⁰⁷ More info at: <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/doctoral-education/theatre-academy>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

doing so, engages on a profound reflexive activity on her own artistic practice. *The Techniques of Gesture Language – a Theory of Practice* (2011), by Maya Tängeberg-Grischim, refers artistic research in the abstract: “This thesis presents the findings of its author’s artistic research on non-encoded, widely understandable gesture language techniques. It is based on practical experience and of the empirical skills of the field.” (2011, p. 6). Obviously this fact alone does not originate artistic research; nonetheless it sheds some light in an increasing awareness of the emergence of the field, which naturally followed the setting up of the Department of Research Development at TeaK in 2007.

Also in this year was abolished a distinction between artistic and research degrees, giving place to the “umbrella concept of artistic research” (Annette Arlander, 2009) in the Theatre Academy, one which currently covers all the different practices taking place in the Department of Research Development, Tutke and the doctoral programme. Also for this reason the remaining 6 dissertations I have accessed through HELDA are taken as artistic research, although they fall outside my preconceived boundaries of the field. Leena Rouhiainen’s dissertation from 2003, *Living Transformative Lives - Finnish Freelance Dance Artists Brought into Dialogue with Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology* is an outstanding work on subjectivity and professional development of freelance dance artists resorting to an impressively elaborated background of phenomenology and an exemplary competent methodological work. However, and while extensively dealing with first-hand knowledge as a dancer, with interviews to other freelance dancers, testimonials and other empirical data, the study does not produce artistic work of its own. I am at the point of considering that original production as a fundamental condition for being in presence of artistic research. Other examples from 2001, 2003 and 2009 move around pedagogical concerns, improvement of teaching-learning-performing processes, phenomenology and professional development. Two cases post-2007, one from 2013 and other from 2014, are also openly dispensing the artistic part while engaging in complex theorizations of practices.

There is also the written part of the doctoral work of Annette Arlander, available through the second issue of Acta Scenica series and published as far back as 1998¹⁰⁸. The title is *Esitys tilana* (in English: *Performance as Space*). Arlander’s work has been pioneering in tracing the path of artistic research as it is being taken today in the Nordic countries in Europe. Her articulation of practical work and reflective writing has inspired the pioneering spirit that is often assigned to Finland in this field (and Sweden as well, and also Norway, in a certain way). Annette Arlander has been profusely publishing insightful texts about artistic research and

¹⁰⁸ Retrieved from <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/33401>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

performance art, through Acta Scenica (2012) and in dedicated chapters and journals (2008; 2009; 2010; 2013). Her work and the wide range of her activities (as teacher, artist, lecturer, board member, editor and collaborator in many initiatives of the concern of artistic research) are very inspirational. Arlander's views are quite useful for an understanding of artistic research from the point of view of a practicing artist. The English abstract of her written thesis reveals a very acute conscience of the entanglement of reflective writing and artistic practice: "The text is divided into two parts. The first deals with the space of a performance on a general level and in the light of previous research, while the second describes the practical work and the performances. The space of a performance is approached as a place that creates meaning on the level of physical space and the space described in the text, and as spatial relationships between the performers and the spectators. It is discussed using the concepts fictional and factual space, performance situation and 'performance world'. The performance-audience relationship is seen as composed of the stage-auditorium relationship in the space, the mode of address in the text, and the chosen performer-spectator relationship" (Arlander, 1998, p.7). The research centre of TeaK is the Performing Arts Research Centre – Tutke. *The Guide to the Performing Arts Research Centre of the Theatre Academy*, the centre which is responsible for research and doctoral studies at TeaK, in the previous version stated in the foreword that "At the Theatre Academy, all research is artistic, practice-based or practice-led research in art or in arts pedagogy"¹⁰⁹. Ahead in the document is again stressed the dual focus on art and pedagogy by announcing that "Doctoral studies are a challenging opportunity for a performance artist to be educated as a researcher of the practices and possibilities of one's own art form. The goal is to develop one's own expression, artistic experimentation and research skills for producing new knowledge and experience in performing arts, in the challenges of artistic work and/or the teaching of these fields of art" (2010, p.1). What apparently seems a subtlety, an inclusive measure to amplify the target audience of the programme, will determine results that fundamentally vary the nature of artistic research. More specifically, the structure of doctoral studies require that "The research (180 cr) is based on a plan of research that includes artistic or practical part(s) and/or a written part" (2010, p. 7), leaving space for what seems the possibility of a written part only to fulfill research demands. Unfortunately statutes regulating Tutke, including degree regulations and degree requirements for the doctoral studies, are only available in Finnish. My understanding of the research field is not articulating so professedly pedagogical intents, leaving the peculiarities of arts education to the field of arts education. I will stand with the view that although artistic research is an institutional contingency, not

¹⁰⁹ This same sentence is still findable in the webpage that the University of the Arts Helsinki dedicates to research. Retrieved from <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/doctoral-education/theatre-academy>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

every doctoral study in the arts, or even through the arts, is a contribution to the development of the field of artistic research. Whenever the outcomes bypass contemporary art field to cling to related areas of pedagogy, ethnography or therapeutic studies, to give a few examples, then artistic research is not artistic research but arts education, ethnography of art or wellness.

FAFA/KuvA - Finnish Academy of Fine Arts of University of the Arts, Helsinki

The Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, known as FAFA or as KuvA (the first an English acronym and the latter in Finnish), does not provide open access to dissertations produced by their doctoral students. Instead, some of these works are published as books by the Academy press, and so are for sale through their website. During my stay at KuvA as visiting researcher, in the beginning of 2015, study coordinator Henri Wegelius offered me and our Department of Arts Education in the Faculty of Fine Arts of University of Porto a few of these books.

In the published *The Artist's Knowledge – Research at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts* (2006), Jan Kaila gives some hints on numbers and names of doctoral students, as well as a bit of history: “Three stages can be seen in the activities of the postgraduate program up to this point. During the first stage (1997-1999), the group of six students chosen gathered together for work and theory seminars as well as continuing their artistic productions and research work. ... In the second period of the program (2000-2004), 2-3 students were admitted annually. The laboratory-style seminars now became broader, more sub-divided and heterogeneous in their range and the art-forms represented, and in this sense they covered a wider field of practice. ... The postgraduate program's third stage (2004 onwards) began under the leadership of Professor Jan Kaila. This stage has been marked by a refining of academic criteria, along with national as well as international networking” (Kaila, 2006, p.8). According to the same text, from 1997 to 2006 KuvA, from the nineteen artists enrolled, four have graduated: Jyrki Siukonen (2001), Jan Kaila (2002), Teemu Mäki (2005) and Jan Kenneth Weckman (2005).

Add to that the dissertation of Petri Kaverma, featured in *Everything but an Island* (2012), who has defended the dissertation in 2012. Considering also the two theses that were published by the Academy, one in 2010 and the other in 2012, from the beginning of the programme until 2012 there are at least seven accomplished dissertations. *Moving Shadows. Experimental Film Practice in a Landscape of Change* (2012), by Sami van Ingen, is intersecting six of his films and a written part of his demonstration where he seeks to problematize art-making in the film medium and experimental practices. The reflective writing aims to follow the process of creation and to give insights from the perspective of the artist as creator.

Denise Ziegler's *Features of the Poetic* (2010) is the theoretical part of her doctoral study or, as

they say at KuvA, of the “doctoral demonstration of knowledge and skill”. It links to an exhibition where Ziegler explored concepts she analyses in the book, whereas the book also discusses things learned in the making-of of the exhibition. In other words, both platforms inform and relate to each other, as presupposes the entanglement suggested by artistic research. *Features of the Poetic* featured in Manifesta 2011, as part of the project *As the Academy Turns*¹¹⁰ curated by EARN – European Artistic Research Network. This project comprised a symposium, an info lab presentation as part of an exhibition, and an artwork in the form of a soap opera (by Tiong Ang). The focus of the symposium was put on the ways in which research trajectories in art are being shaped by the academy and what are the challenges that emerge for the academy as well. In order to set such inquiry, “... an investigation has been made into the practice of artistic PhD research currently being conducted in art academies. During the three-day *As the Academy Turns* symposium, eight exemplary doctoral research projects from leading European art academies were presented and discussed”¹¹¹. In addition to Denise Ziegler’s dissertation, have been discussed other completed theses by Magnus Bårtås (Gothenburg), Matts Leiderstam (Malmo) and Maija Timonen (London) (who is now teaching at KuvA and TAHTO) and other four that are still in progress. The panel that critically commented on the projects comprised “... high-profile authorities such as Juergen Bock (Lisboa), Mika Elo (Helsinki), Tom Holert (Vienna), Jan Kaila (Helsinki), Sarat Maharaj (Malmo), Tuomas Nevanlinna (Helsinki), Marquard Smith (London), Hito Steyerl (Berlin), and Jan Svenungsson (Berlin)”¹¹².

I add this brief with the intention to give an insight of the network formation that supports and gives life to the phenomenon of artistic research. Looking in retrospect, I think that the formation of EARN outsets very much the efforts that have been collectively undertaken in Europe (especially North and Continental countries), ranging from assembled groups, associations, and academic programmes set in partnership. The “high-profile authorities” participating in *As the Academy Turns* are very much the core group of personalities that have been carrying out the most notable and disseminated events on the field – together with the curator of the project, Henk Slager, and a few other personalities in arm’s length of any of these mentioned names. They are usually to be found in at least one of the staff boards of the main universities and academies dedicating to artistic research, and are usually ready for partnerships involving other similar institutions, as well as working on ways to penetrate in art

¹¹⁰ “Manifesta’s invitation to organize a collaborative project in Murcia in 2010 fully matched EARN’s philosophy, since EARN believes that the research debate should relate as directly as possible to concrete artistic practices. This perspective was the natural starting point for the project *As the Academy Turns*, developed for Manifesta 8. *As the Academy Turns* is a multilayered project exploring the potentials and the tensions in the growth of artistic research and the current academization of art education”. More info at http://www.mahku.nl/activities/publications_MaHKUzine10.html. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹¹¹ Retrieved from: http://www.mahku.nl/activities/publications_MaHKUzine10.html. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹¹² Retrieved from: http://www.mahku.nl/activities/publications_MaHKUzine10.html. Last access on 30.06.2015.

world with projects that aim at reinforce that bridge between academy and art-making. Most of the events and literature milestones I've mentioned in the section of the establishment of artistic research as a field of knowledge are, one way or another, related to the personal or institutional efforts of any of these personalities.

TAhTO - Doctoral Programme in Artistic Research, Helsinki

TAhTO¹¹³ group, or TAhTO school, as I've spotted in different occasions, is a doctoral programme in artistic research resulting of the partnership of two universities: University of the Arts Helsinki and Aalto University School of Art and Design. Formed in 2013, University of the Arts is, in turn, the joint project of three academies: Finnish Academy of Fine Arts (FAFA/KuvA), Theatre Academy (TeaK) and Sibelius Academy.

TAhTO started in January 2012 and is expected to outcome the first graduates by the end of 2015.

It is a programme explicitly dedicated to artistic research, as TAhTO is the Finnish acronym of "Taiteellisen tutkimuksen tohtorihjelma", which stands for the English "doctoral programme in artistic research". Therefore, the work of this students is not based in preconceived notions of artistic research that could be driving the structure and objectives of the programme; these students are actually assuming "...responsibility for the development and future of the field through their own research", to the extent that "The outcomes will include not only new degrees and researchers, but also methodologies, practices, academic pedagogies and assessment criteria for artistic research as well as expertise on the interaction between art and society"¹¹⁴. What makes TAhTO unique is that they explicitly assume this trailblazer role.

The group is very exclusive. Their students are enrolled in the programmes of the partner institutions, and have applied to be part of this supplementary school of artistic research.

TAhTO is funded by the Academy of Finland, the main funding public entity, presumably for being an innovative programme that unites the arts and research. According to what I was told in conversation with Mika Elo, there is an amount of money attributed to the programme, managed by the board, but next year's funding might be transferred in a different manner to the respective partner academies, probably meaning also a different organization of TAhTO.

It is still very early to ascertain the overall performance of the first year, since the first graduates are still to accomplish their researches. From what I was told in the interview I made with Leena Rouhiainen, Annette Arlander is already elaborating a report that might serve as the basis for the future assessment exercise.

¹¹³ More info at <http://www.artisticresearch.fi/tahto/about/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹¹⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.artisticresearch.fi/tahto/about/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

The activities of TAhTO are very concerned with the public presentation and discussion of the research undertaken by the students. Regularly are organized seminars – research seminars, theme seminars and open seminars – where students present the state of their research and receive feedback. It was in the occasion of one of those research seminars that I came to acquaint myself with their work and, consequently, with the Nordic context.

In September 2015 I attended Ice Breaking Fantasies Festival¹¹⁵ in Helsinki, organized by TAhTO students. The festival consisted of an exhibition of the students' work, performances, sound events, a closing party, presentations of their in-progress research, roundtables and keynote presentations in a seminar titled *Why do we do what we do?*. In these days I had the chance to meet Jan Kaila, Annette Arlander, Janneke Wesseling, Esa Kirkkopelto, Leena Rouhiainen, Henk Borgdorff, Anita Seppä and learn about the work of TAhTO's students, as well as the lectures of Esa Kirkkopelto and Leena Rouhiainen, Janneke Wesseling and Mick Wilson. My presence was also important to set things for the seminar *Conversations on Artistic Research* that I was by then planning to organize in November in Porto.

At a personal level, this festival marked my realization of how networked and internationally organized was the phenomenon of artistic research. The authors that I used to read before were there, most of them, at the same time and place participating in an academic event. They talked of past events, they prepared future plans. My conscience of the importance of the Nordic context was also prompted at those days. In one way or another, from many of the authors publishing and organizing relevant events in the concerns of artistic research can be spotted a link to TAhTO or to one of its board members. Just to give a few examples: Annette Arlander and Esa Kirkkopelto, long time teachers at Theatre Academy, had important roles in the foundation and accompanying of TAhTO group; Hito Steyerl and Jan Svenungsson, who taught at Kuva, are now teaching in Berlin and Vienna, respectively; Mika Elo was previously a teacher in Aalto University, and now teaches at FAFA/KuvA; Leena Rouhiainen, member of TAhTO's board, is now also part of the board of Society for Artistic Research; Jan Kaila, once part of the staff of TAhTO and vice-rector of FAFA/KuvA was recently appointed professor in Sweden; Mick Wilson composes the Advisory Board of TAhTO while directing the doctoral programme at Valand Academy; Janneke Wesseling is co-director of PhDArts at KABK/Leiden University and was invited speaker in Ice Breaking Fantasies Festival, as did Mick Wilson; Anita Seppä is the actual director of the doctoral programme of FAFA/KuvA and was once part of TAhTO staff; Henk Slager, director at MaHKU in Utrecht, is not taking direct part in TAhTO but used to be visiting professor at FAFA/KuvA, and a longtime collaborator with Mick Wilson, Jan

¹¹⁵ More info at: <http://www.artisticresearch.fi/tahto/news/ice-breaking-fantasies-festival-makes-artistic-research-palp/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

Kaila and Anita Seppä. Together with the last two, Henk Slager formed the team that organized the 'event of the year' in what respects artistic research, The Research Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale, commissioned by Seppä and curated by both Kaila and Slager.

The quality of the discussions and the work shown seemed so high-standard, everyone so committed, that I remember I felt baffled for the first time of my life in this kind of academic seminar-like events. In fact, they were far more interesting than the all equally average feeling I end with in this kind of events, by outstripping the ever present discussion of knowledge production and assessment.

Other Finnish doctoral frameworks

Doctoral studies in art ministered at Abo Akademi University, University of Helsinki and University of Jyväskylä are not relating to artistic practice but to art history and pedagogical, social, political and human aspects of art and culture. Tampere University of Applied Sciences offers higher education in Art only in BA and MA levels, as well as Turku University of Applied Sciences.

Research in higher arts education in the Netherlands/The Hague

In most European countries polytechnics are not awarding PhDs, whereas in some cases master degrees are being hosted in polytechnic institutions. However these are not regarded as valid as those offered by universities, so that in order to follow to a doctoral programme, the student of the polytechnic has to collect additional ECTS to match the requisites applied to university students.

According to Erik Viskil, " [a] university programme is different from an art school programme in the Netherlands; we have a system with two 'streams' of higher education: the university and what we call higher vocational or higher professional education. The university is scientific, scholarly, based on research and striving for research, whereas higher vocational education is more practically oriented"¹¹⁶.

In the Netherlands, the Technical University of Delft awards PhDs, although not in art. Academies of art are keeping their autonomous statuses from universities, benefiting from this separation in what concerns, for instance, requirements for teaching positions, since it is not compulsory that teachers in academies are PhDs. Academies of art are also taking advantage of the possibility of courses organized in association with universities – in collaboration, that is! - that allow for doctoral programmes without undertaking profound changes in the academy's

¹¹⁶ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Erik Viskil at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

structure – as says Janneke Wesseling, “[s]ince our Hogeschool, our Art Academy cooperates closely with the University, it was only logical that, after the Conservatoire started with the PhD research in Music, which is docARTES, it was only logical then also that KABK, which is the Art Academy, would join with the programme in Visual Art and Design. So the logic behind it is that we as the entire Hogeschool, which consists of the Conservatoire and the Art Academy, is a collaboration with Leiden University”¹¹⁷. So the differentiation between polytechnic education and scientific education is ‘technically’ being preserved in the Netherlands, with scientific education being thus reserved for universities, while applicability and technical developments are the aims of polytechnic institutions.

The Royal Academy of Art and the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague form the University of the Arts and, in association with Leiden University, they are the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts. This Academy hosts two doctoral programmes: docArtes (since 2004 and together with Amsterdam Conservatoire) for practice-based research in music, and PhDArts, a doctoral programme for visual arts and design, running since 2008. My interest in Dutch framework, and the reason for staying a few months in The Hague as a visiting researcher was to get to know better the organization, aims, staff and students of PhDArts¹¹⁸.

The implementation of the Bologna Agreement has not eclipsed the binary model, although there have been shifts and changes in trying to adapt to an also changing reality. A 2010 report on higher art education commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Education¹¹⁹ has made some considerations on this model, suggesting not the extinction of such system, but its revision. In the document was claimed that polytechnics should not try to look like universities, and instead should re-profile themselves in the open possibilities of research relevant to professional practice. This also leaves an interesting interstice for the higher art education institution to be placed upon: sometimes regarded as a ‘polytechnic-plus’, since by no means it matches the scientific demands of purely research universities, post graduate arts education should also take the chance of the shifting environments prompted by Bologna, not to necessarily join university framings, but rather to claim for a space for useful artistic research. Judging by the amount of criticism in the public sphere towards the requirements of university teaching, research and assessment, the integration of the Academy of Fine Arts of Porto in the University of Porto, which originated the present-day Faculty of Fine Arts, seems to be generally perceived by artists and teachers alike as a mistake.

¹¹⁷ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

¹¹⁸ More info at: <http://www.phdarts.eu/Index>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹¹⁹ *Differentiëren in drieboud*, accessed in <https://eliaschools.wordpress.com/2010/09/06/higher-arts-education-in-the-netherlands-two-reports/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

In Portugal the possibility of a university of the arts is something yet to be explored. And despite in the Dutch's report the University of the Arts London is given as an example, the Dutch Academy of Creative and Performing arts is also doing well exploring that role.

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After leaving Helsinki, I arrived in The Hague in the middle of February 2015, preparing for a stay of five months as visiting researcher at KABK – Royal Academy of Art/University of Leiden. Just a few days upon my arrival, PhDArts programme held one of five Spring Collegia at the Academy. Usually Collegia are just open for the staff, supervisors and studentship of the programme, except in a few cases where they are elaborated as public symposia¹²⁰.

This was the second Collegium of the Spring Programme 2015, and comprised the presentation of two students and one initial lecture by an invited speaker. This Collegium was my introduction to the group and first acquaintance with their dynamics. That evening some of us went out informally to Der Stroom, for a public talk of Jürgen Bock and Ângela Ferreira on their project *Maison Tropical*, so I think my introduction to PhDArts group was easy and quick.

On that Collegium on the 19th February I met again Jeremy Diggle, who was the invited lecturer of that session. Again I was delighted with his methods and very personal approach to artistic research. The session comprised also the presentations of Yota Ioannidou, after Jeremy Diggle's lecture, and Delphine Bedel's after dinner.

As an artist, Diggle shared with us one of his complex narratives, visually led and partially autobiographical. Once more I found it very inspiring for the way I felt engaged in the succession of pieces he put together and how these made me think of more general things of the broader field of research. We talked for a while during dinner (which in the Netherlands is scheduled at 18h, in the middle of the work plan of that day), again about my research, Portugal, Cumbria and Australia, his near future artistic plans, and my nomadic current state. After dinner the session went on for the last presentation.

Everyone in the audience is expected to contribute with something to the discussion, either by commenting or posing questions. This is part of the duties of these students, as an active audience, and their role is specified in the norms of the Collegium¹²¹. They proved to be a very concerted group in what respects this feedback stimulus: "... the primary goal of the Collegium

¹²⁰ From the official document of PhDArts on "Collegium PhDArts": "The Collegium is a meeting where doctoral students, staff and supervisors discuss current research projects and exchange feedback, where students learn to situate their research questions and projects in broader contexts, and where more general intellectual and artistic exchanges take place. All doctoral students report here on their research progress in papers and in oral and artistic presentations". The document offers instructions on the time of presentation, the time intended for discussion, the role of the audience in posing questions, and the necessity of distributing written material for the colleagues and staff at least one week before the Collegium, so that it can be discussed. It also proposes a list of topics to be discussed independently of the research being presented. Since this document is not publicly available except for PhDArts students, I will not include it in the "Bibliography" section of this dissertation.

¹²¹ It is written "Each student (who is not presenting) will prepare at least one question based on the distributed materials. These questions are to be reflective and critical, not informative (i.e. not merely asking for more details)" (PhDArts Collegium 2014/2015).

is getting feedback. In other words, a student should organize her/his presentation in such a way that s/he can receive an optimal response with regard to various components of her/his research. One possibility to achieve this is to pose questions to the audience, about problems concerning the content and/or about problems concerning methodological or formal matters. ... In general the student should keep in mind that her/his fellow PhD candidates might not be experts on the same terrain. ... However, as all students are dealing with practice based research, they all are supposed to be able to contribute something with regard to methods, the relation between written part of the dissertation and the artistic outcomes, problems regarding progress, time table, etc”(PhDArts Collegium 2014/2015)¹²².

As said, this Collegium of the 19th of February included the presentations of Yota Ioannidou and Delphine Bedel, the first went right after Diggle’s lecture, and Bedel’s took place after the break. They were quite different, as are their subjects, but the two insightful to listen to. I had previously read their research projects, as did all their colleagues, in order to prepare the session and the feedback in advance.

The first interesting fact I came across was that the presentations were not a repetition of what was written in the projects. This act, *per se*, seemed to me it embodied the conscience of the different expectations associated with different forms of documentation. Text, oral and artistic practice are all tied to the same investigation, yet are grounded in distinct platforms which mobilize also different tools and ways of articulation of the author’s concerns. These realizations are not meaningless details that should go unnoticed; they do play a role in the broader understanding of artistic research and its most crucial points. What the separation ultimately means for the notion of artistic research in what concerns its reification in a dissertation, is that the writing part should not repeat the practical investigation, or vice-versa. The dissertation must function as a whole, but the wholeness is not to be found in each of its components, through different languages, but perhaps in an articulation of these that occurs outside themselves – perhaps in the subject? The components are unavoidably connected, but they must offer different perspectives on the studied topic through their own particular structures of making sense. This, it seems to me, is how PhDArts staff conducts the investigations.

My interest in looking at the working methods deployed in PhDArts and other programmes lays precisely in observing such procedures, the importance dispensed to such aspects, in order to access the general convictions that support their view on the field. Therefore it is in these smaller peculiarities that are more often than not embodied the political positioning

¹²² This is part of a series of official and orientating documents of PhDArts curriculum and structure, which were kindly sent to me by the programme coordinator, Judith Westerveld.

towards a main subject. So even if the research background is always present, Yota Ioannidou opted to put the emphasis of her presentation on the artistic side of her investigation, in contrast to the written project that shared a more theoretical approach and general explanation of the research proposal.

Yota Ioannidou spoke more of the artistic productions she had been developing in articulation with the research proposal, and shared with us a video of her participatory lecture *The Storyteller, the Knife and the Machine*, included in the Athens Biennale 2013. I was told and shown things I couldn't know just by reading her research proposal. In turn, the written text gave me a general positioning that I could not possibly understand just relying on the oral presentation. This actually made me think, because, as I see it, it sort of removes the absolutism so often assigned to text: the written document is not expected to comprise everything that concerns the doctoral investigation, either by means of in-depth reflection, or mere description of a practice; everything is the sum of every part, each playing its unique role. PhDArts was therefore proving to promote a balanced view on the matter of the form and documentation of artistic research.

Yota Ioannidou research subject is "Research based art as Docudramaturgy: performative aspects of research based art at the beginning of 21st century", and she starts off the question: "What performative aspects are emerging in the research process of collecting, registering and presenting material and in what ways are they contributing in knowledge production and aesthetic experience?"¹²³. In the document she sent the staff and colleagues of PhDArts for this Collegium, she also wrote that "[i]n my art practice the research process itself becomes the artwork". This fragment of text has become the trigger of the problematic aspects on Ioannidou's research extensively discussed during the Collegium.

I see that many developments in contemporary art may have led to an increasing subjectivation of the artist as being more research-minded, and therefore to be interested in a reflective art making. The contemporary artist has reached a point where it seems part of the way to be an artist also to go down in the contextualization of the work, and to position this work and the author in face of political and social events. Placed in the middle of a knowledge society, where the production of knowledge has become a new capital, the artist feels the need to have a word on where this economy meets art practice and the art world, so that the public-ness of the artwork does not escape artist's control completely. The appearance of the phenomenon of artistic research can therefore be regarded as political position, in the side of the artist. In this sense, the use of the term "research" ought to be an informed choice, in

¹²³ As the document is not made publicly available, I will not include it in the "Bibliography" of this dissertation.

conscience of what it mobilizes. Similarly to what Tom Holert says in *Art in the Knowledge Based Polis*: “The moment one enters the archives of writing criticism, interviews, syllabi, and other discursive articulations produced and distributed within the artistic field, the use of terms such as ‘research’ and discussion about the politics and production of ‘knowledge’ are revealed as fundamental to twentieth-century art – particularly since the inception of Conceptual Art in the late 1960s” (2009, pp. 8-9). This fragment was coincidentally quoted by Yota Ioannidou in her research project, even though I don’t think the sense attributed to his words was the same that I did here. I stand in the position that the engagement with the issue of artistic research in the present-day requires a fully understanding of the ways the concept differently spans, and the tensions it is involved in. Objectively, this means that the use of the term “artistic research”, or “research”, in an artistic research investigation, must presuppose a public explanation of the views of the author in such a context, in the same paths that a contextualization is needed in relation to the artistic field, to methods applied, and to other existing researches focused on similar subjects. Even though artistic research investigations are not attained to study artistic research as a phenomenon, a personal positioning of the author in this context is beneficial, even if brief – in a similar way of what Leena Rouhiainen has stated about her doctoral students of Tutke: “We have fifteen, twenty doctorates in artistic research. What is actually done there it’s two pages that people reflect, comment upon their approach to artistic research. And then they go on about the actual project or process that they have been involved in”¹²⁴. What such statement would allow for in the benefit of the investigation is, for instance, to avoid the confusion of overlapping research aims and research methods, which, in the case of Ioannidou, seems to have been the issue raised by the audience at large. Predictably, the questions at the final of the presentation were inquiring not about Ioannidou’s expertise on her concept of “docudramaturgy”, but instead turned to her methodology, the clarity of her research question, the affirmation of her positioning towards the research question, and how she was articulating the theoretical reflections with her artistic practice. The starting point for the discussion was Ioannidou’s practical achievements, some interrogations centered in the connections of these with her enunciated research topics, and bringing on the issue that in her work the research topics of the theoretical part and research topics of the artistic productions were not clearly matching. This can be problematic because, although the two things – theory and practice – are unavoidably separated, but united by the same subject, as would argue Jan Kaila (2008), their relevance in the same investigation is that they address in their own ways a common inquiry.

¹²⁴ This is a transcribed extract of an interview I did to Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy Helsinki in 9 Feb 2015, during my stay as visiting researcher of University of the Arts. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

The importance of a “third voice” in Ioannidou’s investigation was put forth in the discussion. Diggle suggested the third voice to be, for instance, an anthropological approach to her collected documentation, so that it could be analyzed in the convergence of three perspectives (adding to her artistic and theoretical views). It could be a view from anthropology or from somewhere else, I think, as long as it could contribute to prevent a biased undertaking on the narratives used by the artist. Ricardo Giacconi, a colleague, talked of the possible inclusion of a “third narrative” as, for instance, the official historiography, important for Ioannidou to keep in mind, since she is dealing already with two other kinds of narratives - one more unstable deriving from collective discussions, and other more scientific and archeological based – and she is interested in producing a counter-narrative by focusing on specific elements that might have been forgotten or disregarded by the official discourse.

The importance of this third voice is not based in hypothetical fulfillment of a detected lack of legitimacy in the approaches utilized by Ioannidou, neither should be regarded as an attempt to bring on more scientific or valid add-ons to the play. It seemed that its need resided much more in the necessity of clarifying what was the driving force of her work: ‘What is primary in Yota’s research: the material or the methodology?’, was asked at a certain point. The theoretical inquiry seemed to be taking its own way, independently from the way the artistic endeavor was going through; the third voice, in whatever shape that would come, could perhaps interpose this departure and connect the two parts in a third element. Or so was my interpretation.

As a backdrop of those discussions was a fundamentally critical aspect of Yota Ioannidou’s work: the apparent superposition of method and research motivation. In regard of this, the political events she addresses in her artistic practice – the performances or performative lectures – risk a detachment from the rest, both because the links are invisible, and because the highly political force motivating and appearing on her practice is not so far addressed in theoretical reflection. It is as if the model she sketches with “Research based art as Docudramaturgy” – her written proposal - would dispense the other political performances, since it had become the research itself. We could very well be in face of two independent researches¹²⁵.

The articulation of the different components of the research requires a careful analysis of the contexts deployed and the relations established between the arts. The articulation does not

¹²⁵ This superficial analysis does not intend to be a critical review of Yota Ioannidou’s work. First, it is not my role to pursue such commitment, and second the moment to which I am reporting is fixed in February 2015. From that time I have talked to Yota Ioannidou more times and read new produced texts of hers, witnessing substantial changes in the direction of the research project. Her work, which I find genuinely instigating – otherwise I would not bring it here – is included in my investigation for the lines it allows to explore in relation to the wide phenomenon of artistic research, in particular documentation and the relations between method and aims and text and practice. The same applies to the work of Delphine Bedel, which I consider useful to problematize the notion of artist-as-producer, so interconnected with that of the artist researcher.

need to be explicit – which can sometimes fall into flat descriptive examples, but forms that assure the interconnection have to appear and demonstrate an entanglement between research aims and methods employed that fully cross the articulation between text and practice.

Lilo Nein, PhDArts student, has described the problematic about Yota Ioannidou's research proposal in the following manner: "... You try to understand research-based art as 'docudramaturgy', but at the same time you say that the research itself becomes the artwork. I think there lays a problem that you are doing an artistic research about research-based art, and these are two very different but also very closely connected terms. I think it makes sense to go there and look at those two different expressions of research. Because when the research itself becomes the artwork then one cannot argue at the same time that there is a research about research-based art, because research-based art has to produce artworks in order to communicate the research. When you say 'the research itself becomes the artwork', then this implies that the process of what you're doing is already art, which brings up the question of 'what is the role of presenting it then?', can there be another form, and what is this form if it's not art is it then academic writing, for example, or is it embodied knowledge that is not talked about or... what is it? And what does this mean concerning artistic research? If the research is about researching, and this is art, because you define doing the research as art, then this would mean that you research about research that is art, but what is then the research meaning to artistic research in relation to the art? It would really make sense to just define what is research-based art, what is the practice, this is the topic, what is the object of inquiry, is this your own practice or from your own practice that all these questions come up. But you're doing this with the methodology of artistic research so you have to ask what in the methodology is artistic about the research".

In fact, much of the debate generated around Yota Ioannidou's research proposal and presentation, seemed to be deriving from a fundamental aspect: her positioning towards where her artistic research was placed needed to be clarified. This absolutely was being perceived as an urgency in the current stage of her work, otherwise, research, artwork, art making, methodology were all being used indiscriminately and the work could be just deflating its potential, in view of the criticism at the Collegium.

I surely do not think that artist researchers have to be talking about the possible definitions of artistic research all the time, or of its epistemology whatsoever, since artistic research is, in the first place, about making artworks to articulate inquiries, and not to constantly analyze the field as an outsider. Nonetheless, in order to improve the potential and transformative power of a work of this type, terminology has to be adequately used, as do other tools – and my

“adequately” reports to ‘with conscience of’, not in submission to some system of rules. For this reason I argue that in such a stage of the troubled political and economic present, where artistic research is being ‘experimented’ in its flexibility, put to test all the way, used and abused, it seems to me of pivotal importance that every individual enrolling in such an adventure clarifies for him or herself what he or she thinks about the political spaces in which the future work will be inscribed. Only then the outcome can be adequately placed, documented and distributed, in ways more interesting than only the institutionally correct. Delphine Bedel presentation followed a different direction. Her talk was a comprehensive insight on her proposal, completed with extensive photographic documentation in the related projects she has been involved in parallel, but also for the sake of her doctoral study. We were driven through a series of photographs of products, symposia, print and publishing fairs and similar events, with which Bedel intended to report her later activities and share a state of the art – in images. The writing document that was sent in advance for staff and colleagues of PhDArts is the draft of an article she is about to publish soon, whose content is related to her research proposal, and titled *Publishing as Artistic Practice. From Hard Copy to Software Culture*¹²⁶.

The general interrogation that arose after the “reader” (as Jeremy Diggie referred to the guiding aspect of the presentation) of publisher artists, from analog publishing to the digital, was ‘how is this an artistic project?’. To Delphine Bedel, it seemed that the collection of events and extensive material evidence of her practice has turned the ‘artistic’ aspect just self-evident. But in an artistic research context there are no self-evidences, and one fundamental requirement to artist researchers is that they are asked to question their positioning and aims all the time. In Yota Ioannidou’s case, the absence was most felt in what concerned the research positioning, but in Delphine Bedel the question was more about how to inscribe her practice as a publisher within art world.

What Bedel did was a statement, similarly to artists’ statements: without further explanation, the work ‘speaks for itself’. Basically Bedel stated she is an artist whose artistic research practice is mediated by publishing studies, and when questioned to clarify her positioning in regards to artistic research, Delphine repeated that she is an artist doing research through publishing. Her explanations were given in the form of repetition of this statement. Artists’ statement work fine in the art world, but the artistic research context requires further explanations.

Delphine Bedel’s presentation brings on an important issue to the formulation of the field of

¹²⁶ As the document is not made publicly available, I will not include it in the “Bibliography” of this dissertation.

artistic research that is also considered in the handbook of PhDArts. It says that “[t]he artist/designer-as-researcher distinguished him- or herself from other artists by taking it upon him- or herself to make statements about the production of his works and about his thought processes” (2014, p.3)¹²⁷. So while artist researchers make statements about “the production” of their works and about their “thought processes”, artists do statements about their works and about art. Or, artists do statements¹²⁸. Statements like throwing a bomb before running away to hide the self. An artist statement can state that the sky is green whereas everybody is finding it blue on a good day. An artistic research statement opens this to discussion while it considers “the production” and the “thought processes” involved. At the time of discussion the artist is still withdrawn elsewhere while the artist researcher is up in the stage making the work processes known and therefore open the work to critique and make it shareable with the community: “The researcher allows others to be participants in this process, enters into a discussion with them and opens himself up to critique. The researcher seeks the discussion in the public domain. Without public discussion and the exchange with peers the research lacks its reason for existence. When this exchange takes place in an academic context, within the framework of PhD research, certain conditions apply” (2014, p.3)¹²⁹. Delphine Bedel stated that she is an artist. What this entails is that what she does is art, notwithstanding research as self-critique and as contextual studies seemed to be absent. So apparently she stated it as an artist, not as an artist researcher.

It is pertinent to remember that artist researchers and theoreticians of the field have all been struggling since the first steps of the installment of the field to develop artistic research in a different direction of that of artistic practice, stressing additional features that are to be taken as fundamental differences between the two, in order to turn it into something that goes by the name artistic research. Such features are then absent, or disregarded, by art practitioners in their artistic practice, but should not be neglected in the practice of artistic research. They mostly comprise communicative skills and dialogical spaces where criticism and self-reflexivity can take place. In this sense, one aspect that distinguishes artistic research and artistic practice

¹²⁷ As the document is part of the internal regulation of PhDArts and not publicly available, I will not include it in the “Bibliography” of this dissertation.

¹²⁸ The distinction of artists and artist researchers in the basis of statement-making seems unanimous through the interviews I have conducted to students of doctoral studies in art and teachers of artistic research. They all agree the principle that the artist researcher has to explain her or his statement, even though a statement can be just a matter of argumentation in all cases, as indicates this fragment of the interview I have conducted with Yota Ioannidou:

CA: But in the academy you cannot do statements.

YI: If you are clear you can state anything actually; if you somehow define them in the proper way.

CA: Yes, but as an artist I can just say ‘the sky is not blue, but it’s green’, for example. But in the academy I will have to prove that the sky is green.

YI: Yes, it’s true. But I can use, that somebody said, that this person said that the sky is not green, it’s blue and I’m stating that.

CA: It’s about argumentation.

YI: So, if you can argue about that, that’s it. The problem is we have to learn how to argue in that context.’

¹²⁹ This is a fragment of the Handbook of PhDArts. As the document is part of the internal regulation of PhDArts and not publicly available, I will not include it in the “Bibliography” of this dissertation.

is that whereas the last is about making statements to the world, artist researchers establish conversations. Not all kinds of conversations, as would argue Janneke Wesseling, but a conversation with peers institutionally framed, and where suggestions and changes are welcomed: “So to me that is the core element of research: it is this partaking in a dialogue with peers or other people in the field”, said Wesseling. I asked, “Like starting a conversation?”, and Wesseling clarified, “Yes, but not just any conversation, but in either an academic environment or in a public environment”¹³⁰. Lawrence Weiner has referred to that conversational feature in respect to art; yet artistic research seems to fit better the conversational tone and the “instituting” (Esa Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p) potential that Weiner called on: “The reason one makes art is to start a conversation. And when this conversation starts, one has the fortune that this ends in culture. It is a new conversation. And meanwhile the world has turned on” (Weiner as quoted in Wesseling, 2009, n/p).

Delphine Bedel’s statement was declaring herself an artist as a publisher. When asked what means to be an artist while being a publisher, Bedel invoked three aspects that shaped that subjectivity: “you publish your own, you produce others and that becomes a form of inter-textuality, and then you create an economy”. This surely requires further exploration, yet it seems to be in line with the emergence of the artist-as-producer that the narrative of dematerialization of art and the *educational turn* (Wilson & O’Neill, 2008) inspired. The knowledge economy is the scenario where the artistic research practice is established, the self-production is the new skills of presentation, documentation and distribution required by the contemporary artist to control the public-ness of the work of art produced in the knowledge economy, and the inter-textuality works as the “conversation”, in this case a networked conversation, advocated by Lawrence Weiner. Bedel’s testimony put her in close conversation with other publishers (as artists and non-artists), yet the conversation with the artist researchers in the room seems more oblivious. Lilo Nein’s intervention was again quite straightforward and concerned with the implications of an artistic research undertaking: “Sometimes I didn’t know anymore if you were talking about publishing as your artistic practice as a photographer, or publishing as artistic practice as a publisher. Is for you publishing something that has to be rethought as something that we use as artists? In everything that you explored in your analogue publishing practice, which was quite extended, so to speak, you had both. You published a lot of artists’ books, but you also produced your own content. You used the book as artistic medium”.

¹³⁰ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

One suggestion for the further exploration of the subjectivity artist-as-publisher came from Jeremy Diggle, who proposed an interrelation between curating and publishing, becoming this curatorship dimension the bridging element between Bedel's publishing practice and the creative dimension that the PhDArts' audience asked to be revealed. His point was fundamentally to stress the importance of Delphine Bedel clarifying the creative dimension of her practice as publisher. After making a distinction between editing and curating, Diggle justified his preference for curating, instead of publishing, alleging the former "feels it is more like a creative practice". Bedel insisted she prefers "publisher", since the outcome is, in fact, publishing. The curatorship reference could, perhaps, be regarded not in place of publisher, but as a suggestion to explore the creative side of a publisher.

Keyed up with Bedel's apparent nonchalance in regards of the necessity to affirm a place of action for her practice, and to clarify aspects of the proposal, I asked whether she was thinking about dedicating a part of the written thesis to problematize the issues raised by artistic research and its subjectivities, in a similar way to that that had been discussed in the aftermath of her presentation. Delphine Bedel politely answered that it was not a topic of her research. I was led back to the conclusion I brought with me when I attended the Ice Breaking Fantasies Festival of the TAhTO group in Helsinki. Back then, the conclusion of the roundtables was that artist researchers don't have to speak all the time of what is artistic research, because the way they do artistic research already presumably comprises in itself appropriate discursivity and problematization. I came to the conclusion, after the joint experiences of Yota Ioannidou and Delphine Bedel, that we should just stand with the mentioned Finnish vision only in the cases where a clear self-conscience of the field is embodied by the artist researcher. Otherwise a lot of work in what concerns dismantlement of subjectivities and political positioning within the field are needed with urgency.

Both presentations of this Collegium made up to the PhDArts focus on 'giving/getting feedback'. With around 30 minutes of presentation, the two propitiated collective and engaging discussions that spanned for 45-60 minutes in each. Add to that the case that everyone really took upon themselves the role of contributors to discussion so that the quality of interventions and the resulting tips for the presenters proved to make this setting successful. It is true that dialogical platforms are only worth of that name if they carry out participation. In the case of PhDArts it seems to be a flowing in quality. The work done by the staff in the thinking of the structure and elaboration of guiding documents is bearing fruits. The expected performance of the audience in the 'giving feedback' is prepared in advance and fixed in a Collegium document, as mentioned before: "Topics to be discussed (in no particular order and no exhaustive listing): The position of the distributed material within the research;

The progress (roadmap) of the research and possible obstacles; The role of the artistic development within the PhD trajectory; Theoretical and artistic assumptions; The context within which the research takes place; Methodology; Research question and hypotheses; Form and structure of (parts of) the dissertation; How/where to find relevant data, information and literature; The contribution of the research to already existing knowledge; The documentation and distribution of the research results; The position with regard to similar research projects”¹³¹. These can be discussed in respect of any project, independently of the research focus.

The Collegium that followed, *Unfixing Images*¹³², in March, had a slightly different format, especially in terms of scale. It was prepared as a bigger event, open to the public, and with expanded participation of invited guests. The three organizer-students, Mikala Dal, Andrea Stultiens and Riccardo Giaconni, have invited guests to undertake presentations, while they also presented their own work and state of progress. The structure has reinforced my previous impression on the importance given by the programme to the moments of public discussion of the work of the students, while also stimulating their skills as producers of the work – it was in their hands all the organization and preparation of the event.

In May happened another Collegium, of which I attended the first day. The format was similar to the one of February, again a smaller scale and a more intense discussion was expectable. I was in the audience in the presentation of Brigitte Kovacs, who, knowing of my investigation had previously sent me her preparatory writings. The academic year ended with the last Collegium in 18-19 June.

Commentary on the analysis (after Finnish and Dutch experiences)

Going through details and experiences in the different contexts of artistic research in Helsinki and in The Hague renders different possibility of analysis. In the Finnish case, artistic research exists in postgraduate education since a longer time and in a wider structure, which seems a logical reason for the high number of available academic publications in free access databases. For this fact, I opted for a more statistical analysis on the Finnish context, and for a more personal and direct report on the Dutch case – which I have reduced to the PhDArts programme.

In a more general commentary on these experiences, it seems worth a remark that the territories open by the arrival of Bologna regulations are to be – and are being – used in the benefit of artistic research. Even though this commentary does not constitute a supporting

¹³¹ Since this document is not publicly available, I will not include it in the “Bibliography”.

¹³² More info at <http://www.phdarts.eu/Programme/SymposiumUnfixingImages>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

impression of the Agreement, it intends to highlight the necessity to use the grey zones, or no one lands that appear in the interstices of what was previously established, the nature of arts education, and what is being imposed after Bologna. In this sense, the recurrence to programmes in association seems a wise move to fulfill institutional requirements of higher arts education and European policies, yet with interesting possibilities for the sake of artistic idiosyncrasies. The organizations known as university of the arts, both present in Finland and in The Netherlands, are putting forth this possibilities dealing with pure university constraints and experimenting the sort of “polytechnic-plus” more relaxed status.

Other aspect standing out in the Dutch experience, and which I have incorporated in what I consider a personal view on fundamental parameters of an abstract notion of artistic research, is the conscience of the independent roles of the written part of the thesis, and that of oral presentations. After attending a few Collegia at PhDArts programme it became clear that the staff and students seem very aware of the different aims and possibilities both media comprise, and thus students do not fall into repetitions of the written projects when they do oral presentations neither the other way round. Public and oral presentations are regarded as important moments and approached by students with responsibility. In relation with this awareness is also an aspect that the staff of PhDArts takes very seriously, that is the undesirable situation of an artistic research production (be it a presentation or a written material) becoming an artistic statement, which is to say, dispensing further explanation and assuming self-evidency. In my opinion this is going the opposite direction of a more interesting understanding of artistic research, and this sense the staff of PhDArts encourages the students to present their work and to think their work as if ‘engaging in conversations’ with peers with whom a dialogical relation can be established for the benefit of both sides.

Although in my notion of artistic research I openly direct the interests of artist reseachers into the domain of art making, I still consider of vital importance for these subjects to have a reflexive positioning towards the several tensions that cross the field of artistic research. Even if, simultaneously, I do not think that artistic research is to be an endeavor about artistic research, which would otherwise mean that it would be dedicated to understand and explain itself, still it seems determinant for a sustained practice that the practitioner is able to reflect and to critically address the issues in which the field that hosts the practice is involved in. Even more true when the field is currently fragile and the target of constant criticism, as it is the case with artistic research. My experience in The Hague has showed that this particular aspect is not consensual among students of PhDArts. If in one hand Lilo Nein persistently analyses discussions having in mind her references of the field of artistic research, other students do not seem to consider it important for their practice to have that critical positioning towards

the field in which, presumably, their investigation is being held. For example, Delphine Badel answered me by saying that topic was not part of her research, and the interview that I have conducted with Yota Ioannidou reveals that she also does not intend to include such reflection on her investigation. In what concerns this aspect, the Finnish situation is contrasting. In the interview I had with Leena Rouhiainen, she said that every student dedicates a few pages (even if only in a brief way) to a reflection on the issue of artistic research, which shows a different concern with this particular matter. A propos of The Research Pavilion of the 2015 Venice Biennale, a pavilion organized for the Finnish artist researchers, the students of TAHTO group organized a small publication where each of them wrote one or two pages with personal considerations about artistic research and their inscription on that field.

I will turn attention to the Helsinki grounded analysis of the establishment of artistic research, mentioning the main conclusions and more remarkable considerations.

Even though many theses are available already, the incomplete data at disposal forces my conclusion on the Finnish context to remain quite superficial and lacking the necessary rigor that could make it otherwise an insightful statement. Having said this, my commentary is therefore based in an impression formed from the fragmented data referenced and in a great amount of guessing, supported, also, by acknowledgements that I have been constructing in recurrence to other sources throughout the investigation.

From the descriptions and regulations set up by the considered universities and academies, it has become obvious that persists a tendency of exceedingly stipulating and detailing the norms in what concerns the formats of the dissertations in these artistic research programmes in Finland. Such exaggerated standards are of dubious utility. In the first place they seem like having been formulated out of mistrust in the abstract idea of an individualized and as free as possible procedure for artistic research, especially in attention to the artistic nature to which it is assigned. Therefore, the overly detailed regulations are an attempt to control not only the outcome of the investigation, as well as the initial intention, as the student enrolls and is informed of the formal settings. Such settings are risking playing a way too influential role over what is simultaneously believed to be a personal inquiry on the part of the artist researcher. Secondly, and after going through a representative sample to attest the following argument, the reality is that the works scarcely fit to the complex combination of norms and categories theoretically formulated, but hard – let alone desirably – to fulfill. The cases at Sibelius academy were a good illustration of how far from reality were the preconceived categories in which to inscribe research projects *a priori*: are the categories “doctoral dissertation”, “artistic dissertation” and “applied project” absolutely necessary?

My primary intent in pursuing the survey was to acquaint myself with the kinds of work that were being developed by the main ‘actors’ of the artistic research scene, videlicet the artists studying in artistic research doctoral programmes. The lens through which I am interested to gaze is the effects these framed research projects may have at the level of contemporary art sphere. For this end, it is of keynote importance to acquire knowledge on the processes utilized by these artists in their researches, as well as the outcomes of these processes or, as put by Maarit Mäkelä, “[t]he central question is, in what ways can the creative process and the concrete products of making be interwoven with research?” (2009, pp. 29-30)¹³³.

Another important question has to be formulated: since one of the hardest struggles for the installment of artistic research as an academic field of knowledge production concerned the expansion of the format of dissertation to include the practical part (creative part, artistic part, production part), how many of these researchers are actually taking advantage of that possibility? In her conference paper *Problems of Practice-based Doctorates in Art and Design: a viewpoint from Finland* (2011), presented at the International Conference on Professional Doctorates in Edinburgh, Nithikul Nimkulrat said that in Finland “[t]he inclusion of artistic part in doctoral research or practiced-based dissertations has been possible since the 1990s. Until the end of 2009, the number of completed dissertations which include creative enterprise is 70, 15 in the Aalto University School of Art and Design, 5 in the Academy of Fine Art, 43 in the Sibelius Academy, 4 in the Theatre Academy Helsinki, and 3 in the University of Lapland’s Faculty of Art and Design” (Nimkulrat, 2011, p.59). The data used by Nimkulrat is quite similar to the values published by Maarit Mäkelä in *The Place and The Product(s) of Making in Practice-Led Research*¹³⁴. An analysis focusing exclusively in these values gives the impression that not many dissertations are opting for the artistic format. These numbers account 57% for Sibelius, 5,5%-8% for Aalto and 29% for TeaK. In what concerns FAFA/KuvA, they have a rate of 100% since the established model in 2001 demands an artistic part as a fundamental standard of the degree. The number I’ve presented for Sibelius is slightly different. Basing my inquiry in open access databases, as stated previously, I came to a roughly 43% percentage for what could be considered artistic research (10 points less than the values of Nimkulrat and Mäkelä), which inscribes the artistic features present in less than half of the delivered dissertations¹³⁵.

¹³³ Maarit Mäkelä’s contribution to the anthology *Reflections and Connections On the relationship between creative production and academic research* (2009) published by Alto Univeristy in the aftermath of the 2007 seminar *The Art of Research* mirrors a similar concern of mine on understanding what are these artist researchers doing in their investigations. To this end she analyzes the structure, aims and outcomes of five dissertations of artistic research. More info at: <https://www.taik.fi/kirjakauppa/images/f5d9977ee66504c66b7dedb259a45be1.pdf>. Last access on 17.05.2015.

¹³⁴ See Table 1 of Mäkelä’s article, p.30.

¹³⁵ As I said, it is a rough value. And it is an estimated percentage. According to my counting, until 2014 there are 72 dissertations tagged in the “art study” category (until the end of 2011 they are 62), but I was able to consult only 5. From the 5, only 3 seem to me be fitting a fair notion of artistic research. Using the rationale 3/5, from the 72 dissertation then only 43% would be considered artistic research.

The matter is not, of course, the accuracy of the values that I came to. Points up and some points down apart, what really stands out is that the applied categories to classify kinds of dissertations have proved once more they are of no use. Even worse, they give an erroneous image of these doctoral courses, and they even hinder the process of scrutinizing these references. In short, this is about bureaucracy at its best.

More problematic for me is the fact that whereas no unanimity is to be found in what respects a definition of artistic research, still time is wasted in the attempt of finding the best working categories to tie a notion otherwise too vague and fuzzy. If already within categories such as “art study” or similar (as it is used in Sibelius Academy) are significant differences in the inscribed investigations, I think that instead of increasing the degree of complexity, it is perhaps time to simplify: artistic research is, professedly, an articulation between artistic production(s) and written reflection. Everything else is superfluous to the development of artistic research as a field of knowledge production. According to Annette Arlander, the separation of artistic (making) and research (thinking) works is, in itself, an academic artificiality that divides two forms of explorative procedures whose combination can bring surprising results (as cited in Mäkelä, 2009, p. 31), it is also acknowledged by now, after uncountable publications and debates on the topic, that a format that allows for the perfect match of theory and practice is utopian. Knowing this when he was appointed professor in the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki, in 2004, Jan Kaila “... suggested that the demonstration [of knowledge] be split into two separate components, a theoretical part and a production part. My purpose behind such a division was not to have doctoral students split themselves into two different researchers... It was a formal solution... they nevertheless remain productions of the same person, and therefore have a mutually intensive influence”. And Kaila explains the risks of the reverse possibility: “Preventing the split, merging the theory and the works into one whole, would call for the creation of a set of standards for artistic research that would favour artists who make only textual works (in practice, texts). This would be absurd for Finnish art” (Kaila, 2008, p. 7)

Leaving Finland and expanding the scope, I might not be wrong when I say that everywhere these doctoral programmes that have been settled in higher arts education in Europe require a written part in the dissertation. This written part may be conducted in different forms and goes under many names: written component, writing supplement, theoretical part, written reflection, and so on. The requirement for attaining a PhD or a DFA in these structures is invariably an articulation of artistic work (usually original productions, undertaken with the graduation in view) with writing tasks. For sure variations may occur within each programme (procedures of supervisors, importance of one part and the other, academic writing

regulations, etc), but nothing that can be effectively improved with distinctions between “Art Study Programme”, “Research Programme” and “Development Study Programme”. It is possible, however, to conclude basic criteria common to these programmes, among which certainly are an epistemological interest clearly formulated as the driving motivation of research – this is the link to what some call ‘the production of knowledge’: a systematic approach deployed either in exhaustive procedures or deepening strategies to depleting the epistemological interest – which could also be identified as a kind of obsession enabled by the temporality of the research; continuous concerns with communication, documentation and distribution of the results – what would render the individual research into a *conversation* or an *institution* (e.g. Borgdorff, 2006, pp. 11–25; Dombois, 2006, pp. 21–29; Elo, 2009, p. 20; Hannula, 2002, pp. 73–88; Kaila, 2006, pp. 8–10; Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p). Not any programme should fear the imposition of a written part for the dissertation, neither regard it as a handicap of what could otherwise be a truly artistic programme – but I will go to this topic later.

A last aspect that assaulted my mind during the excursion on categories, regulations, labels, names and specifications, and which was, in fact, one of the inquiries that served as a backdrop to initially undertake this investigation, was the curiosity to understand what was in fact treated and worked in study programmes that explicitly are named after “artistic research”. I have realized at a certain time that the more recent programmes integrated the explicit term on their names, making me wonder whether there was any shift of the object of study from previously existing programmes that were doctoral courses on artistic practice and lacked “artistic research” on their names. TAHTO assumes itself as “... the first joint doctoral programme of Finnish art universities that focuses solely on artistic research and explores artistic practices, thinking and observation”¹³⁶, and takes the name “Doctoral Programme in Artistic Research”. The programme offered at Theatre Academy Helsinki is also explicitly referring artistic research in the name: “Doctoral Program in the Performing Arts and Artistic Research”. Holding that inquiry, as a disquiet, was the fear that to assume artistic research as an object of study in itself, the work developed would embody a bureaucratic, technocratic and pointless speculative approach to formal aspects of artistic research as a discipline – somehow in line with the trend of literature that has been damaging the public image of artistic research: too concerned with the establishment of patterns, categories and internal defining regulations, and neglecting the actual making of artistic research. Even more awkward was the realization that there were jobs for teachers of artistic research. I have met some and read that it was the name given to the position of some of the authors I often quote. Henk

¹³⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.artisticresearch.fi/tahto/about/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

Slager, for example, is a teacher of artistic research¹³⁷. Mika Elo is one as well¹³⁸. In *Artists as Researchers – A New Paradigm for Art Education in Europe* (2013), Jan Kaila begins his writing by saying that: “In 2003, when I begun as the professor in artistic research at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts...” (p. 9). Others can be cited. For instance, I’ve had a very interesting conversation with Tatjana Macic, who “... teaches Artistic Research at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague”¹³⁹ in the Master of Artistic Research.

What does it mean to be a teacher of artistic research? What is teaching artistic research?

In some of the interviews that I have conducted I have posed similar questions, trying to perceive whether this leap of artistic research from the backstage to the foreground meant anything rather than the affirmation of a concern, or the evidence of a trendy phenomenon.

Simo Kellokumpu has suggested that one of the main reasons for the appearance of programmes with “artistic research” on their names (as well as assignments and teaching positions), is because: “ (...) it has its own history. Within, for example, *avant-garde* movements there are many artists who have done already artistic research, which can be considered as such, which is how it is now on-going discussions about artistic research. Or is it practice led? Or is it practice based? Or practice as research? Or, here it is called artistic research instead of practice based or practice led. They have chosen artistic research here... it’s connected for sure to the history of the art university here, and to the on-going debate that was happening in the end of the 90s in the art academies. I don’t have a complete idea of why it is here this way. But the main point is that the discipline is open, multidisciplinary and based on artists’ practice”¹⁴⁰. About the first year of the programme of Theatre Academy, Simo told me that they “(...) went through different texts to get to know what different thinkers, artists and writers mean by artistic research. What do we mean by artistic research? What do we mean by performative research? What do we mean by critical theory? It’s this kind of similar on-going pool of discussions like what do we mean by artistic research? And through these discussions there starts to be focus points which different academies are choosing as artistic research or as practice led or practice based research.”¹⁴¹. Regarding the same question about the reason behind the inclusion of “artistic research” in the title of recent PhD programmes in art, Leena Rouhiainen gave the following explanation: “What distinguishes it [the research

¹³⁷ Check Henk Slager’s profile at MaHKU webpage, and at the bottom it is written “Professor of Artistic Research at HKU Utrecht University of the Arts; Professor of Theory and Artistic Research at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts/University of the Art Helsinki”. More info at: http://www.mahku.nl/ma_studies/fine_art_lecturers_641.html. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹³⁸ According to his profile in the Research Catalogue. More info at: <http://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/?person=5602>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹³⁹ Retrieved from Tatjana Macic website “Biography”: <http://www.artkosmika.com/biography.html>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹⁴⁰ This is a transcribed extract of an interview I did to Simo Kellokumpu at the Theatre Academy Helsinki on 4 Feb 2015, during my stay as visiting researcher of University of the Arts. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

¹⁴¹ This is a transcribed extract of an interview I did to Simo Kellokumpu at the Theatre Academy Helsinki on 4 Feb 2015, during my stay as visiting researcher of University of the Arts. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

they do at the Theatre Academy] between BA's and simply art practice is that there is also an interest in knowledge. So it's not only developing art by doing art, there has to be this reflection and the articulative side. There is always a use, a purpose, a political agenda with knowledge that it is produced for some reason, for some aims and goals. And that sort of is what makes it different from simple art practice"¹⁴².

I am afraid that to use the term "artistic research" to designate a discipline or a teaching job, adds an emphatic meaning to artistic research that it does not have, and cannot be. Only in the worst cases have artistic research become the object of discussion; the less interesting publications, and the less interesting events are, to my view, those that pretend to discuss the nature and the mission of artistic research in general terms. On the contrary, approaches to work done by students and artist researchers in their multilayered and pluralistic ways and themes, called by the name that they have, or by a more descriptive yet accurate term like 'research in and through the arts', makes justice to what is actually at stake and does not unnecessarily throws the discussion into never ending circles. As Janneke Wesseling said in one of our conversations, 'artistic research is more an attitude than a discipline itself'.

¹⁴² This is a transcribed extract of an interview I did to Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy Helsinki on 9 Feb 2015, during my stay as visiting researcher of University of the Arts. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

WRITING MEDIUM

Writing (and who is) the contemporary artist

Small antechamber: university in the knowledge economy

Rather than a simple phenomenon of migration of artists into the academy, the emergence of artistic research is due to the transformation of many of the art academies into universities, or their incorporation within universities. As part of the university system, art has been adopted by the field of humanities in third cycle education, and usually it is as a discipline of humanities that has been positioned within the university system, and it is from where it stretches its activities. A consultation of The Frascati Manual will confirm that “research in and through the arts”¹⁴³ has not been recognized as an autonomous field – at least, for the time being¹⁴⁴.

As a humanities discipline, artistic research was introduced to the economy of knowledge into which society and university have grounded their relationship and exchange of capital, since Fordism has been declared outdated. In the society of control, capital is largely of immanent nature, and so are the forms of control. The production of knowledge offers both: it is a highly controlled and controlling system, and a huge capital producer. Knowledge, that is, has become the capital *per se* in the post-Fordist era, and the function of the university has roughly shifted from a cultural agent to a knowledge validator through the assignment of diplomas that share an entrepreneurial nature rather than a cultural one (Readings, 1996). It is important to take into account the changing role of the university today, to better situate the sometimes troubled relationship art students, and, of particular interest here, the doctoral art students, have shown in face of the relevance earned by university in the art world in the last decade.

Political and social changes have drastically affected the role of university in the last decades. Expectations on the educational institutions have thus to be adjusted to the new reality and potentialities.

The corporatism of European Community and the expansion of globalization have drastically changed the role of university in the public sphere of societies. Its previous commitment of cultural formation and national identity (of the Nation-State) has shattered and gave space to

¹⁴³ As the term is used at PhDArts (Leiden University/ KABK The Hague).

¹⁴⁴ *Society for Artistic Research* (SAR) has been out taking initiatives to put pressure the OECD to recognize the autonomy of artistic research. The advantages of the argued autonomy are debatable, though, and if for the one side it could be a positive measure for funding projects and programmes, on the other hand a serious discussion in the epistemological motivations and intended outcomes seems to me to be still lacking within the ‘community of artist researchers’ (if there is any) for a stronger and more enlightened position on this topic. Here is a proposal for revision of The Frascati Manual for the inclusion of artistic research, submitted by SAR in 2013: http://www.societyforartisticresearch.org/fileadmin/autoren/pdf/SAR_Proposed_Revision_of_Frascati_Manual.pdf. Last access on 30.06.2015.

the emergence of a university *ethos* very similar to that of a transnational bureaucratic enterprise. Bologna Agreement and the interests it carries out are the face of this transnationality in one hand, but also of this entrepreneurship that has largely harmed the standards of a Kantian, Humboldtian or simply humanist idea of university.

In the name of transparency and mobility, Bologna has introduced a system of comparability between European programmes, which may ultimately be responsible for the standardization and flatness of not only national peculiarities, but especially idiosyncrasies of fields of activity that have been ravished or neglected to fit to the politics of equalization imposed by Bologna. Such politics are guided by the idea of excellence, which replaced the previous nationalism of the Nation-State (Readings, 1996).

Since the Bologna Process started out that it has become more obvious the status of a corporate university taking place and rising from some other hegemonic residual projects.

Kantian reason was inspired by German idealism and shaped an appealing solution in a period of opposition to the overpowering positivist tendency derived from the Enlightenment. Kant's ideas were, however, addled by the ineffectiveness of philosophy towards authority, whereas sciences, on the other hand, were earning more and more autonomy and so going sound without philosophy. Traces remain, of course. The so-called Humboldt tradition, milestone in the conception of a humanistic educational institution, and remaining today as one of the most influential residual projects of the history of the university, has bequeathed an important combo between education and research, quite relevant to today's idealized university.

Wilhelm Humboldt, the founder of the University of Berlin in 1810, has reacted against the direction taken by many higher education academies, whose appropriation of the French revolutionary ideals to their new role was resulting in accurate and passive illustrations of the state-owned plans. His humanist perceptions are questionable in the present-day though, due to the huge impact Enlightenment performs on his discourse. To Humboldt, the university ought to provide self-education to individuals, in a balanced relation between objectivity and subjectivity (this underlined by Humboldt to oppose the former generally privileged pragmatic tide), and charged to set up the culture of the nation. Although very centered in the individual, Humboldt introduced the practice of research in the university as a way to interlock the individuality to social affairs, as he considered the students and graduates had the duty – after the training - to intervene in the world around them. The passage through university would instill in the individual a social and academic responsibility for the future. Leiden University still cherishes this idea of the duty of the academic, as evidences the formal discourse in graduation ceremonies. Artist Researchers who become doctors in Leiden have to handle the social responsibility of having become academics, in addition to them being artists. This is not

a matter of being awarded with a degree, but actually a matter of going through a process of subjective transformation that expectedly brings prospective changes.

Humboldt's notion of research within university prevails and is double faced for today's context. For the one side, it certainly introduces research as an ongoing process fundamental to and *raison d'être* of the university; on the other side it links research with social affairs, which, if taken too strictly, may be mistaken by the applicability of capitalist rationale. In such context, knowledge as an end in itself has not a place anymore; its existence had been reduced to situations which return initial investments – that vision regards education as an initial investment whose outcomes have to be useful for society. It is no longer about performing certain tasks, but about possessing certain skills or faculties that can generate indirect profit to economy.

Humanities are to be profitable, and arts as well. It is in this very sensitive circumstance that research and art meet within university and in the context of a knowledge and control society. The Bologna Process is hugely fueled by this sort of capitalist aspirations in its general corporatist setting. In the University of Porto, Bologna principles are being implemented officially since 2006, although discretely at first and more heavily since 2008. At the end of 2009, the public University of Porto – referenced as the biggest and most “successful” (!) university in Portugal - has changed to a public foundation under private law, opening wide the doors to the influence of economical groups. It thus exemplarily embodies the exact picture of privatization that the curricula organization proposed by Bologna, and the composition of boards in universities, lately incorporating private and entrepreneurial voices, is carried out by Bologna's strategies of improvement, the most skeptical would argue. It is quite clear that the current situation is favorable for accounting, assessment, and to inform against success or to denounce a failure in assessed performances.

The challenge for artistic research is to produce basic research (opposed to the applicable research of Technical University or of the capitalist scope) that both does not disappoint artistic expectations and that is, at the same time, able to dialogue with the institutional knowledge stances – as much as possible imagining the institutional stance as a university without condition, in the sense put by Jacques Derrida, as the place where everything is questioned and where a “deconstructive critique” occurs (Derrida, 2001). The interest of art in establishing links with university is tripartite: i) artists want to have a position in face of what is regarded as valid knowledge and discuss the political, social and economic conditions that frame the validation; ii) institutional recognition gives access to more funding – and also to reverse issues of assessment and generalized control of outcomes that, according to some authors, are more harmful than beneficial; iii) a pedagogical turn has affected contemporary

art in the transition to the twenty-first century, and thus university is also regarded as a potential place for artistic practice and circulation of art (as are museums, galleries and public space). In the words of Jan Verwoert, “[n]owadays art academies are no longer simply institutes for art education, but places where art is received, produced, collected and distributed. The idea of the open academie has consequences for art, the practice of exhibition making, and art education itself” (2006a, n/p).

The second thread is embodied in Stephan Dillemath’s warning on the neoliberalization of the arts through the term ‘research’. As soon as an artistic project synopsis applies research-like terminology, money starts to flow (2011). During the first decade after becoming a university level college in 1978, the Dramatic Institute of Stockholm “... functioned to a great extent as a fund for scholarships. Many artists who did not have any link to the DI were applying for project resources”, reports Gudrun Zachrisson Ones (1995, p. 160), who was the administrator responsible for art development there in 1994. To this day that might have been and still be a good reason for many artists, including even some of the most skeptical on the importance of research in the arts, to associate themselves with research centres, postgraduate programmes and to keep teaching positions at universities. It is also true that art has never been what one could call a priority in governments’ restricted budgets, be it in Sweden, Portugal or anywhere else. Any opportunity to get funds for artistic development is then guaranteed to be snatched by watchful artists of prey. At least as long as there are not many counterparts or difficult compromises to fulfill – often for the more purist artists any non-artistic demand is likely to become a painful thorn on the side. On his testimony, Gudrun Zachrisson Ones remarks that “we [at the DI] were developing the artist more than the art. The experience and knowledge that came out of each project stayed within one person. This is a classical distribution problem” (1995, p. 160). In the respect of distribution, Leena Rouhinainen refuses this self-centered artistic research by stressing an important point for the duties of the field as it currently is being undertaken at both TeaK and TAHTO: despite resulting from an individual endeavor, the research seeks for connections with society and is in constant dialogue with other artists and practices¹⁴⁵. The artist-researcher, or the doctoral student, has to bear in mind that his or her research ought to relate to a community, even though the community might still be under construction. The premises of artistic research announce it as publicly debatable – a condition inherent to any doctoral programme -, and thus pondering communicative skills and allowing for extraneous appropriation. This falls on the issue of documentation, for it’s the way of documenting the processes and the outcomes of artistic

¹⁴⁵ This idea is present in the interview I did with Leena Rouhiainen at the Theatre Academy Helsinki in 9 Feb 2015, during my stay as visiting researcher of University of the Arts. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

research that will condition their communication, archival and distribution. Documentation is to a great extent an academic concern, and thus it has been regulated by scholars and by a research community – in the absence of an artist-researchers community. It may happen that documentation constraints, as well as outcomes assessment, are interfering, sometimes clogging and other times poking, with artistic freedoms. There is a chance that the regulated requirements of documentation and public discussion have embodied the dreaded counterparts that funding enclosed in research opportunities meant until a certain point. There is a chance that as soon as rules were set off, artistic research was no longer interesting for fund-hunters and became that thorn on the side to the more ticklish individuals. The meeting of academic parameters have pulled artistic research to some defining criteria but also removed it forever from any sort of ‘grab and go’ philosophy with which it could eventually be mistaken with.

The third thread is possibly suggesting a new subjectivity of the contemporary artist: a research-minded individual, engaged in self-reflexivity and with instituting practices, to who university is not necessarily a “univcrsity”¹⁴⁶ (Harrison, 2009, p. 139), but offers instead a ground for artistic potential – and with it a set of circumstances, among which are writing and reading routines, ideas of knowledge production and pedagogical interests. All of these threads converge at some time in the writing procedure. Aprioristically seen as an academic constraint, writing embodies the tension of the meeting of art and university, since it is seen as the academic tool *par excellence*, for the control it performs, enables and is subjected to all at the same time. The reification of thought through text is a modality of documentation, enables distribution and constitutes a creative undertaken at the hands of creative people, while at the same time makes it available for measurement and classification at the hands of the economy of knowledge. Even the more optimistic reviews of the integration of art and research in universities are aware of the latent risk that represents institutionalization.

In a critical reaction to the economy of knowledge of our society of control, the art world has recently been conducting several events dedicated to the exploration of the idea of *deskilling* (Bishop, 2015)¹⁴⁷ or *deprofessionalization* (Bratton, 2015), but a critique of this criticism is also needed since the ideas behind *deskilling* seem biased from the beginning. Not without a dose of irony, a student questioned Claire Bishop in a conference at Rietveld Academy: “then were we in the academy yesterday learning a skill so that we learn to deskill it today?”, since

¹⁴⁶ Purposeful spelling.

¹⁴⁷ I’ve attended a conference in Amsterdam, at the Rietveld Academy, whose curator was Claire Bishop and the theme was deskill and its new aesthetic possibilities.

deskilling is only possible after learning the skill. At first sight this sounds a contradiction as a strategy to counteract the economy of knowledge, even risking becoming a nourishing gesture. This initial discomfort in relation to writing and reading cultures in artistic education is certainly impacting how, in later stages, students regard the research-like procedures that an academic context requires. Although research is an academic procedure, and so is impregnated with regulations that account for feasibility and quality, it is not a case of subjecting the artistic self to oppressive standards that tell very little to its practice. In fact, and to support my position, I had to acknowledge which idea of contemporary artist is standing and making sense for much of these students. Definitions such as “research-minded”¹⁴⁸, or as “someone who is always questioning everything”¹⁴⁹ came by. “Sounds a lot like being a researcher”, was my answer to Ato Malinda’s¹⁵⁰ observation. We agreed there is not much difference between the two profiles, which makes me think that researching as a practicing procedure should also go through writing and reading. Howsoever, research is of course not only about reading and writing. Still, certainly it partly is, if only because an artist has to contextualize his or her practice. Add to that that an artist researcher has to dialogue with a community, an aspect which is contained in the *ethos* of research. So artists enrolling in doctoral programmes and undertaking institutional research projects have to care for that. The research community is not welcoming research as artistic statements; these are destined to the art world.

By saying this I do not consider the mentioned situation is undervaluing or even disabling artistic potential. On the contrary, in the scope of artistic research, the social, political and sometimes even aesthetic potential of artistic practice is exalted by inflecting a reflexive excursion.

Writing as *translation*

The inscription of art and artists in the university realm has propitiated a crash of perspectives and of traditions in between the two ways of thinking, and became the ground for critical initiatives and heated discussions of which the theme of *deskilling* is just one example. Artists have long placed themselves in a nonverbal set of procedures, often outside university, whereas the academic institution, even more being a university, has ever since emphasized research as a verbal inquiry. Today’s identity of the university, although affected by corporatism and the knowledge economy, is still very nostalgic of its philosophical and Modern

¹⁴⁸ As Saara Hannula mentioned in the interview I’ve conducted with her in Theatre Academy in Helsinki in February 2015. The entire edited transcription is in the “Annexes”.

¹⁴⁹ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Ato Malinda in KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

¹⁵⁰ Ato Malinda is a visual and performance artist, and a doctoral student at KABK The Hague, in the PhDarts programme.

background, and visibly proud of its history of scholarship and cultural production, largely relying in textual productions for its intents.

Even though a certain amount of reflexivity (internalized, or inscribed in reports of conversations, manifests and diaries) is part of the reality of art through history, it is also true that artists, in particular since Modernism, have shared a dose of criticism and suspicion towards language.

The topic of artists and writing is central to the understanding of artistic research as a field of knowledge production. It is through the relationship it promotes between artistic practice and academic research that a disciplinary artistic research takes shape in its most interesting, most restraining and most productive aspects. Nonetheless, since artistic research has set off its appearance that the relationship between artists and writing has been a ubiquitous clash of *ethos*.

Writing in the academic contexts requires the accomplishment of certain rules in the elaboration of texts, their dissemination and sharing. These rules are the parameters that give access to a community of readers and of experts, so they are the way to allow for a dialogue. An artist enrolled in a doctoral programme is, supposedly, an artist who is interested in dialogue. Or, as the PhDArts' handbook states, "The researcher allows others to be participants in this process [the production of his works and his thought processes], enters into a discussion with them and opens himself up to critique. The researcher seeks the discussion in the public domain. Without public discussion and the exchange with peers the research lacks its reason for existence. When this exchange takes place in an academic context, within the framework of research for a PhD, certain conditions apply" (p. 3)¹⁵¹. Not all of the students are aware or resigned with the exposition to critique that a dialogue comprises, or to the necessity of making themselves being understood by peers. It is often in this ground of misunderstandings and the breaking of fixed ideas that projects collapse and students abandon doctoral studies or artistic research projects. Not all artists have a suitable profile for undergoing research either, neither all artists are interested in stepping into such a territory. The perspective of the institution is that neither the conditions of dissemination nor the writing rules are directed at the content of the writing, remaining the topic approached safe from their influence and hypothetical oppression. This matter will always be envisaged differently and judged partially by scholars and by artists. Although the rules might not be too restrictive, artists still feel they are conditioning the documentation of their practice and research. Or that the documentation of their practice, which ultimately gets the name of

¹⁵¹ Since this document is not publicly available, I will not include it in the "Bibliography".

research, isn't under their entire control, as they seem to consider their artistic activity. It is not by chance that documentation is one of the hot topics of artistic research. The clash of *ethos* is nevertheless an opportunity for students to question and recreate the encounter, proposing alternatives that will impact future configurations of artistic research.

According to Erik Viskil, the resistance to writing his students of the Individual Writing Project at PhDArts experience is due to their previous education: "They [artists in programmes] have been trained in autonomy, and when you write something in a semi-academic setting, you have to meet at least some simple rules. As far as I am concerned these rules are not restricting, but an artist can have the feeling that he is already restricted by simply following a rule of how to document his readings or to account for the sources he has used"¹⁵².

At this respect, occurrences reported in the *Artalk* seminars organized by Haris Pellapaisiotis in Nicosia in 2003 (so a couple of years before the Manifesta 6 committee started the work on the field for the big event) are illustrative: "Although the programme started with artists in mind, it was interesting to discover that the greatest enthusiasm and openness for debate came from non artists, who seemed much more readily able to accept the issues raised within the seminars as abstract philosophical explorations that allowed them to approach their own daily practices from a slightly different perspective" (Pellapaisiotis, 2006, p. 80). The critical voices of artistic research dispose things more or less alike, throwing artist researchers and researchers into a "non artist" zone and, justifying their sympathy for writing and pedagogy from that forced state of "non artists". Previously artists felt anxious for the materialism of art; in the face of artistic research they show themselves anxious for the dematerialization, and maybe that's why in *Artalk* "... a number of artists expressed their disquiet with presentations that lacked visual material and also with work that did not produce consumable objects for placement within museums or galleries. This distinction between art as commodity and art as an exploration of the constitution of 'self' and its relationship to the everyday is an issue that runs through the history of the vanguard in art and is of relevance to the formation of any future art school" (Pellapaisiotis, 2006, pp. 80-81).

Nonetheless, the conscience of the potential power of language in infiltrating and guiding life of individuals is shared by artists, for the good, and for the bad.

The term 'academic' triggers a different feeling to university and to art schools realms; while in the context of the former it is a sign of competence, for the latter it sounds like something to

¹⁵² Extract of the interview that I have conducted with Erik Viskil at KABK, The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

avoid, something that lacks artistic quality. In the two realms ‘academic’ seem to actually be used as oppositional terms¹⁵³.

In a conversation I had with Janneke Wesseling about the Dutch context of higher arts education, she stressed this ‘pride in being a scholar’ that is cultivated at Leiden University (the oldest university of The Netherlands) – which however, one might say, has never obstructed the PhDArts intents and developments in artistic research. But Leiden is an old and very academic institution, not in a bad manner, but in a manner that one wouldn’t be advised to speak there of practiced-based research, since it would sound to Leiden scholars like a thing more indicated to the Technical University. In this regard, Wesseling shows a preference for the term “research in and through the arts”, since “artistic research” is also unsatisfactory to her view, which she explained with humour: “sounds like artistic hairdo!”. For that same reason, when I translate “artistic research” into Portuguese I always opt for “investigação em arte”, instead of “investigação artística”, since the last seems to refer to a superficial appreciation of acting artistically while doing research, which is by no means the same thing as doing artistic research.

Once entered the university, artists have been confronted with the necessity of further self-inquisition on these articulations. The inquiry has been developed frequently in the context of a field that received the name of artistic research, described by Esa Kirkkopelto as follows: “An artist changes their artistic medium into a medium of research. The outcome of the research, no matter what is its final mode of composition, constitutes a medium of research which can be publicly discussed and reasonable assessed. As a result, we get not only a research outcome, some kind of artistic invention, but also a new kind of artistic agent, an inventor, an artist-researcher, the primary expert of the medium that they themselves have created. This kind of process-oriented idea of the research derives from the way the artistic doctoral students organize and carry out their studies” (2011, n/p). The same self-reflection is expected to be assumed in the side of the hosting institution, as well, as a consequence of the critical endeavors of the artist researchers. This seems to be part of the goals of artistic research, as a way not only to establish itself within the institutional university ground, but also as procedure to transform through criticality, to question self-evident structures of power, and to reach a more dialogical ground for art within university. Recently graduated PhDs in Arts Education in the Faculty of Fine Arts of University of Porto have faced this issue. Especially the doctoral study of Inês Vicente has been quite reverberating for the strong artistic emphasis it

¹⁵³ Academic art is a term usually used in a pejorative form to sign lack of artistry. Furthermore, the history of artistic Modernism has not been written resorting to scholar contributions neither to academic artworks, but on the contrary. The narrative of art is constructed with the sequence of disruptive efforts and non-academic examples. The situation propitiates the association of non-academic art with transformative and disruptive art, whereas academic art stands for accommodated and normalized art.

comprised¹⁵⁴. Vicente's work has helped to stretch the notion of a normalized dissertation and added a novel flexibility to the idea of academic writing. This is a task that each and every of the recently formed programmes take upon as a collective commitment. For instance, the Finnish TAHTO group "... encourages students to assume responsibility for the development and future of the field through their own research"¹⁵⁵, which expands the outcomes as not only students becoming experts in a particular field, but also as the expectation that their work actually dialogues and acts upon the field into which they are experts. With them, also the institution in which their work is developed is expected accept the dialogue and go through a process of transformation, sometimes subtle and other times of larger scale. Somewhat this meets what is argued by Kirkkopelto when he says that a process of artistic research has to articulate itself as a medium of invention: such inventiveness is what displays change, what impacts the previous devices and modes of operation, what brings on institutional consequences and what certifies its significance to everyone else beyond the researcher (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p).

Mika Elo speaks of a kind of "auto-hetero-reflection" to designate the self-reflection the artist researcher undertakes in one language (text) upon other language (artistic media) (2009, p. 23). He considers that "[a] broad spectrum of models for self-reflective styles and genres of writing is available. An artist-researcher can hardly hope to offer anything new in this area. However, the situation changes when the artist-researcher begins to move between the visual and the verbal. It is precisely at the point when he questions the boundaries of his 'own' medium that the Janus-faced researcher enters the most interesting areas of research". (Elo, 2009, p. 22).

Yet this is just an introduction of the aims that can be assigned to artistic research. If in the beginning artistic research may have been prompted by the impetus of gaining a place - its own place, still being struggled for – in the parliament of knowledge production sustained in the university, for the most part today its main concerns are turned to the production of artworks and the exploration of articulations of those artworks and simultaneous processes of reflexivity, the great majority of those shaped by verbal language. The artistic field is not just a mirage, but a territory which artistic research wants to integrate.

At stake it is not merely the choice of the verbal or the nonverbal in detriment of the other, the winner of the argument of which one is the better. This is caricature and does not make justice to the complexity of the issue. It is a matter of understanding how productive and how transformative an articulation between the two can be, in accordance to different situations.

¹⁵⁴ The thesis name is *Darkness performing sensisitevness* (2015).

¹⁵⁵ Retrieved from: <http://www.artisticresearch.fi/tahto/about/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

At the moment there are no agreed criteria to legitimize any particular articulation – and hopefully there will never be, for the good of artistic research – and all the conclusions in the topic are quite ambiguous and readily eligible for debate. Mika Elo’s diagnosis follows as: “The problem seems double-edged. On the one hand, the problem originates in theoretical elaboration truly suffering from the passage to nonverbal forms of articulation. On the other hand, it is derived from the shortcoming of the sensitivity to nonverbal elaborations”. Elo supports the idea that “... we need well-articulated passages between different media and high sensitivity to their mediality” (Elo, 2009, p. 19).

Considerable amount of the criticism directed at artistic research finds in the media articulation, or disarticulation, of the artistic and the non-artistic a preferred target and the materiality for indicting epistemological confusion into which skeptics throw artistic research. It is in the stage of fixing the process of research, which partly relates to the issue of documentation, that the tensions between the artists and the academic framework become more visible. Writing, the commonly – ubiquitous – adopted form of academic research, is also the fostered language in artistic research programmes. These programmes dispense special attention with the writing task of artist researchers, and usually the programmes’ syllabuses include an assignment dedicated to improve writing skills, either by preparing the publication of an article, or by discussing the writing in-progress of students.

PhD in Arts Education in Porto requires students to write an article intended to be submitted to a journal of the area of expertise of the text. A similar task is set for the students of PhDArts, where the assignment takes the name of IWP - Individual Writing Project. I’ve attended the meeting with PhDArts students for the commentary on their IWPs and I’ve witnessed a general commitment in giving feedback. The same collective engagement as I had previously registered a propos of the Collegia. Besides the two teachers who supervise these students in their writing tasks – Janneke Wesseling and Erik Viskil -, the colleagues have the opportunity and are encouraged to give their constructive critique towards the works submitted by others. All the texts circulate among the group beforehand to allow that everyone reads the texts of everyone else. Commentaries are generally very insightful, which I found of determinant importance and utility for such gathering moments. To orient students through their writing task, the board of PhDArts has elaborated a guiding document whose opening paragraph is: “Doing PhD research, even when it is artistic research, requires writing skills. Besides artistic work, a PhDArts dissertation consists of a written component. However, in most art educational institutions the possibility for students to learn to read academic texts and to

write proper assignments is rather limited”¹⁵⁶. The same opinion seems to be shared by Jan Svenungsson, when he taught in master programme in Gothenburg who reports that: “I was often surprised at how hard it seemed to be for some students to get themselves together and actually write... something... not to mention the thesis. Having to write can inspire deep fear. Each year, there were surprising cases. Students I knew could write well, because I had seen other texts, but who had such respect for the task ahead that they got completely stuck. A fault committed by several who failed was not being able to let themselves loose, to play around, to go devil-may-care with their writing” (Svenungsson, 2007, p. 9). In mind with this resistance to writing usually shared by art students (from bachelor to doctoral levels), Tatjana Macic¹⁵⁷ proposes to her bachelor students a writing exercise that consists of an invitation to go to the library and, blindfolded, pick three books from the shelves. Afterwards they are supposed to create a narrative involving the three objects. Tatjana is hopeful this is a way to introduce them to the plasticity of writing, and so to make them familiar with writing possibilities offered by artistic research. These young students are, in general, very resistant to reading and writing routines for the support of their practice, with later consequences as their education goes further. They are not simply trained at doing it, and the library is regarded as the boredom room of the academy.

And this is how a student of the TAhtO group describes his struggles with writing: “There is an unspoken requirement that I did not understand before starting my artistic research project: ‘An artistic researcher not only needs to be a good artist, but also a good researcher and a writer’ ... How to find a form for what you want to write about? How to put into words your own artistic practice and research? What kind of a voice do you want to give it? Or maybe, the question is ultimately of what kind of a voice you are able to give it in written form. Writing about your own art is difficult. You must make numerous choices. How to remain honest enough? How not to slip into gritty description or, on the other hand, gloss over what happened? You must continuously try to find out what is significant, what is worth writing about. What new things will your research produce?” (Elo, 2015, p. 1).

The experience of some PhDArts students “... with writing discursive texts and dealing with discursive materials on an academic level is restricted. Furthermore, the staff’s experience is that many PhD candidates are deferring their writing activities too long. Therefore it is a good idea to have PhD candidates experience the process of (academic, scholarly) writing at an

¹⁵⁶ Since this document with the guidelines for the Individual Writing Project is only available to students, I will not include it in the “Bibliography”.

¹⁵⁷ In a symposium held, once more, at the Royal Academy of Arts The Hague (March 2015) I was introduced to Tatjana Macic, visual artist, writer and teacher of artistic research at this Academy, and lecturer at the Utrecht School of Arts, University of Amsterdam and Sandberg Institute. We talked about her practice as teacher of artistic research.

earlier stage of their research process”¹⁵⁸. The document also contains practicalities such as number of words, dates to be respected, and advice on the choice of the title, bibliography and end notes. It seems a good help for students to be able to rely on the indications of that document. In a similar fashion the curriculum of TAHTO group in Helsinki provides what they call the Writing Seminars, where the state of progress of individual writing is analyzed in detail and commented by colleagues, responsible teacher and, in the seminar I have attended on the 15th of January in Finland, also by an invited teacher from other university. Again, the amount of effort dispensed to this moment is noteworthy, since I recall that a whole afternoon was spent on commenting and raising questions on the state of progress of three students’ writing projects: Tero Nauha, Itay Ziv and Henna-Riikka Halonen.

I don’t think there’s a third cycle in art that totally dispenses the verbal documentation of artistic research. At this point I don’t even see that hypothesis as a desirable situation. What varies in the several setup programmes is the more or less importance this parcel represents in the whole work, the kind of writing allowed and encouraged, and some particularities in the articulation with the artistic production. This last part is epistemologically fundamental for a transformative practice of artistic research. One could think from the start that the artistic component is a common denominator for all artistic research doctoral programmes, but, from what I could observe, it is not rigorously a true statement, which highly contradicts the idea of artistic research as research in and through art. The practical component is generally accepted, but only in a few it is compulsory. In TAHTO, FAFA/KUVA, TeaK and PhDArts, it is. As I see it, though, an artistic research doctoral dissertation has to contain an artistic component in articulation with the writing supplement – otherwise it is not artistic research, but an investigation developed on pre-existing works of art.

The plurality of approaches evidence the controversy attached to the matter. The programme at Aalto University accepts an artistic component, while the main emphasis is put over the written document. This must be elaborated following an academic fashion and is evaluated accordingly. At the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts (FAFA/Kuva), the artistic part is the main part of the doctoral study, whose aim is to initiate artists in research procedures – and not the other way round. A written part is also required, whose construction might inform and be informed by the practice. However, in the case of KuVA the evaluation of the textual component does not follow scientific criteria, which again gives rise to a double-edged situation: “A pluralist attitude towards mode of expression has been adopted towards supplements in some circles. As long as it looks like text, this supplement need not take an

¹⁵⁸ A fragment of the guidelines document for the Individual Writing Project.

academic form but might be a literary text, a diary, maybe even a theatre play or a series of poems. However, in trying to sustain the requirement of the textual supplement by this means, its defenders are perhaps revealing that their requirement has always been nothing but a form of bureaucratic conformism” says Dieter Lesage. He suggests that if the textual part is required for the revealed difficulties in assessing the artistic (nonverbal) production in academic terms, then it appears a contradiction to allow an artistic text – “... if the supplement itself also becomes artistic, the question arises of how it might be easier to judge an artistic textual supplement than an artistic portfolio” (Lesage, 2013, p. 146). Whereas I certainly miss the extent of “artistic” that Lesage attaches to the written supplement, I don’t think such flexibility necessarily endangers the access or engagement of the reader/viewer. In mind I have an “artistic” notion of text defined, in this case, in relation to scientific or to academic constraints; a text which in its elaboration and final outline does not follow the quite traditional regulations of academic writing that are applied to scientific and technical publishing, for instance organizational fashions that make short sense in the an artistic subject. However, this *per se* does not mean that artistic is incomprehensible or unintelligible. Even though academic writing still means a set of aspiring universal rules for the conduction of the documentation of its knowledge, I regard the flexibility – or artistry – that recent higher arts education programmes encourage as an evidence of the instituting capacity it carries out as it triggers changes in the hosting institution. This flexibility is a sign of the installment of artistic research within university, but not as evidence of failed negotiation, or “bureaucratic conformism”, but instead as the sign of a conquest. Of course, this is valid only for as long as the “artistic” feature does not menace the critical discussion during supervision, and a communicable result as outcome. In the context of PhDArts, where much emphasis is put on the writing task of the students, the possibilities are still many, and the texts I’ve had access to in the circumstance of students’ Individual Writing Projects, balance in creative ways the creative dimension of their practice with the commitment of an academic study. In the Individual Writing Project meeting that I attended, I have even heard critical reviews towards students who played the philosopher, the sociologist or the art historian, in place of playing the artists that is what they really are, and is what the programme values.

In sight of Derrida’s famous stance “there is no outside of text” (or “il n’y a pas de hors-texte”) (1976), one could argue that the artistic component of these dissertations is, in itself, already text, therefore turning the written supplement superfluous. At the same time, if there is no outside of text, and if nothing can be thought or said outside language, there is no apparent reason for artists daunting the exercise of writing. In this case, what seems utterly important in the exercise of writing is to undertake it in Benjamin’s sense of language, which means to

consider language as not merely communication, but accounting that insofar it communicates, it also communicates itself (1923). The gesture of writing would then be, in these terms, a conscious entry in the structures of language, those pre-existing structures of thinking, of hierarchy, of possibility. The writer, or the artist, cannot jump out of language, but can write whilst asking what writing is (to go back to Derrida). In other words, although it's impossible to escape them, this artist-intellectual can still relate critically to the pre-existing structures and, eventually, transform them.

On the 15th of January of 2015 took place a seminar with TAhtO group at KuvA, which I attended as a guest. It was a research seminar prepared for the students, and where their writing statuses were analyzed. The students writing in English – Tero Nauha, Henna-Riikka Halonen and Itay Ziv – took orientation from a guest professor from Södertörn University in Sweden, Jonna Lappalainen, and the Finnish students writing in their mother tongue received the feedback of Mika Elo. Both Elo and Lappalainen gave keynote lectures in the beginning of each of the two days that lasted the seminar.

Mika Elo's lecture was particularly insightful for my current idea on the potential of writing in artistic research contexts. He started with the introduction of two kinds of elements he uses as tools in his thinking process: "modules" and "interstices". Modules are the internal coherence, as a structured knowledge or given structuring of knowledge. When modules are assembled and put together, something lies between them with the name of interstices, as the space among modules.

The lecture consisted of a series of considerations on what he envisages as being one of the most urgent challenges when thinking of writing within artistic research environments, which is the connection that has to be established between that writing and the artistic processes. In this topic it always crosses my mind Tuomas Nevanlinna, a Finnish philosopher with vast production on the field of artistic research, stating that the artist researcher may not research the artworks he or she produces, but "with (the help of) his or her works" (Nevanlinna as quoted in Arlander, 2013, p. 156), *through* those artworks. Writing is not supposed to look to the artistic production from the outside, but to find ways of interfering with it and being influenced by it. This is what could eventually happen if artistic research doctoral studies dispensed the artistic component. Artists should go through the process of textualization in parallel to the practice, in a chronological alternated way. I am hesitant in referring to the chronology of text and practice, since I've come across examples where the two things occurred in clear separate stages without removing the interest and overall condition of the outcome. For instance, in his doctoral work, Temu Mäki, one of the first Doctor of Arts of the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts (2005), has in the first place accomplished his artistic component

– a series of paintings -, and only afterwards carried out the reflexive essay. The making constituted the motor and container of experiences to the writing that followed, and the two moments are linked with Mäki's ideas of art as philosophical and political form. Also in the example of the clarinetist Mikko Raasakka, Doctor of Music from Sibelius Academy, the writing part of the dissertation took place after the playing, and was majorly motivated by it. These are just examples. But it seems inaccurate to try to isolate the two things, both from the perspective of the doer, and also from the interpretation of the analyst. In any event, the two parts establish always a degree of mutual influence, even if a time line portrays them in isolation - Raasakka's concerts became a platform for the exploration of the ideas he then went back to on the writing; and the artistic production of Temu Mäki can be envisaged as a method for collecting ideas to be further developed in writing. To fix the altercation between one and the other in a rigid rule lacks the space for the particularities of each case, and simultaneously ignores that the making can also form a place to explore the theme of the research in another form than writing, which comprises a specific form of entanglement (where can be embodied the notion of *translation*, as it was worked by Walter Benjamin¹⁵⁹). Categorization, sometimes, has nothing to offer beyond its own conformism, and, in this case of writing and art-making, things are not as plain as any attempt to schematize would show. John Cage once ironically exposed in an interview the superficiality of this chronological fixation, when he said that he had written the score after the play. The interviewer then remarked that in that case it was not a score anymore, to which Cage replied: "Nonsense. This changes our imagination of what a score is. Until now the score always was an a priori and a performance was a performance of a score. I have completely turned this upside down, so that the score is now a report of the performance" (Kostelanetz, 1970, p. 62).

All and all, even intercalation *per se* does not guarantee a prolix inter-relation. Although, in abstract, it seems to set the most adequate scenario for the general aims of an artistic research endeavor, the truth is that each case has its own sensibility. Instead of pursuing a set of rules for this, the challenge resides much more in trying to find the most instigating degree of articulation in order to research *through* the works of art, and not *the* works of art.

In his lecture, Mika Elo invoked Walter Benjamin's theorization on language to develop and present his own thinking to TAHTO's audience. An important Benjamin's remark is the realization that there are many languages, and it is from this multiplicity of languages that Benjamin elaborates on the concept of 'translatability' (Benjamin, 1923b). The real task of translation is not facilitation of communication across the borders of different languages. It is

¹⁵⁹ For Benjamin, translation is not a mere transference of meaning, but it is a form in its own right that rises as a transformation in view of a precedent form of language. See *The Task of The Translator*, by Walter Benjamin, 1923.

not about exchange of information neither about carrying the meanings from one language to other language. Walter Benjamin makes a distinction between the message of a text, and the modes of intention, being these the ways in which things are meant. These modes of intention are textual structures of making sense, and they are specific to each kind of language. The real task of the translator is finding a way of reproducing these ways in which a language makes sense, in another language. The translator has to take a kind of experience of language, and in that sense translating is about going through different sets of experience. The exchange of these sets of experience is what enables the translator to reproduce the ways of making sense of one language into the other.

The bodied translation is therefore a form of text in its own right, independent and not submitted to the hierarchy of the original and the derivation. Neither it is double work for practicing artists – it is something else and not a repetition of the artistic outcomes.

Such realization opens wide the horizons of the practicing artist. From this perspective, writing does not have to be the preconceived idea of a heavily regulated and narrowing experience for an artist, who is forced to transmit in words what he or she rather prefers to convey in artistic forms. Through this logic, writing no longer may be thought as doubled work (Lesage, 2013), because what it does is not simply transforming art into words to express the same intentions. Writing is not the inversion of the alchemy; it does not transform gold into lead at the sight of some perverse sadist scholars. What writing does is other thing, of its own right, that is performed in parallel and in combination with the practice of art. Occasionally they intervene with each other, but always as different things connected by the single subjectivity of the artist researcher.

Great emphasis is put on the artistic practice and on the being an artist of the students by the staff of PhDArts. With this in mind, I have found that they have worked out a quite interesting perspective of interrelationship between the two components of the doctoral research – writing and practice. In PhDArts, at the same time that lively concerns towards artistry are constantly brought to the forefront, also high importance is assigned to the writing task. This importance given is firstly informed by a fault identified in the students' side, of difficulty in writing, and secondly is reinforced by a philosophical position towards writing that enormously expands the range of possibilities of text at the hands of a creative artist.

This position in PhDArts is constructed in ideas very similar to the remarks I've done until now of Walter Benjamin's theory of language and translation. In such conceptual framework it seems acceptable and justified that the two components, writing and practice, take separate distinct ways, and are assessed, discussed and produced autonomously - their entanglement is to be found not in obvious articulations between the two parts, but rest in the subjectivity of

the author. In contrast, in the context of TAhtO, I have witnessed a sense of intertwining at the level of the objects, more palpable and imbricated complexity linking writing and artistic production. The written research proposals of both Henna-Riikka Halonen and Itay Ziv denounce the merge of the two margins in one land. The cases of PhDArts and TAhtO, although resulting in different approaches, are the two making artistic research a field that relies in plurality to conduct the academic requirement of writing and, accounting the case studies I've come across, they are achieving quite interesting results.

Informed by the autonomy of translation and aware of the disposal of so many possibilities for an artist to relate with text, Riccardo Giacconi, artist and student of PhDArts programme, assumes writing and his artistic practice as quite different realities in the composition of his doctoral work. In the Collegium of PhDArts of May, the critique he received for his Individual Writing Project was that it lacked a connection to his artistic practice, since the text was very informative and descriptive about a specific context his research was linked to, but done as if Giacconi was an outsider and not artistically implicated in it. Giacconi was told that his text discusses his documents, but does not reflect on his practice. He replied by saying that he was interested in keeping the two things separated, as a part of the whole of the work he was carrying out. For Giacconi, writing and presenting are two different outcomes and ways of research, each in its own right, and he does not desire to merge or overlap one with the other – in other contexts, text is usually regarded as a an explicative translation of the practice, or, in other words, as the transference of meaning from one language to the other. That would mean for Benjamin just an inferior translation of an inessential content. In his work, Benjamin also argued for the untranslatability of translation (1923), but to the aims of the theme in this text - the articulation of art-making and the requirement of a written supplement in the context of doctoral studies -, the important thing is to retain only the mentioned aspects of his theory of translation: the translation reproduces ways of intention from one language to another and becomes a text in its own right.

However, a very brief consideration of the further untranslatability brings forward an introduction to the in-betweens in language, or the in-betweens of different languages, the interstices, induced by the translation. In his lecture, Mika Elo portrayed verbal language as “the richest archive of distorted relations”, referring to an amount of relations that go hidden, and distorted, when the goal is reduced to mere communication, and attention is focused exclusively on the levels of information, meaning and content. Part of the potential of translation and part of the task of the translator, reside in unveiling these relations, dismantle them, excavate the in-betweens and, as a consequence, find access to knowledge, or to the different kinds of knowledge.

The second philosophical reference invoked by Mika Elo is Jean-Luc Nancy's work on the book *Corpus* (2008). In the book Nancy insists in the idea of writing as a body, which comes in sequence with the translation's dimension of accessing the interstices to render knowledge. We are used to think that a body would be some natural surface for cultural inscriptions; it would be outside of discourse and the discourse would try to colonize the body and try to signify the body. This scenario is about making inscriptions, cultural inscriptions in the colonized body. Nancy introduces the counteract term 'exscription', in relation to inscription, although it is not to be understood simply as the reverse side of inscription. Nancy himself says about the term "exscription": "[W]riting exscribes meaning every bit as much as it inscribes significations. It exscribes meaning or, in other words, it shows that what matters – the thing itself ... and, finally, the existence of everything that is 'in question' in the text ... – is outside the text, takes place outside writing. At the same time, this 'outside' is not that of a referent that signification would reflect ... The referent does not present itself as such except in signification. But this 'outside' – wholly exscribed within the text - is the infinite withdrawal of meaning by which each existence exists" (Nancy, 1993, p. 338). Writing would therefore be that duality between inscription and exscription, like an exploration of their boundaries and, fundamentally, the question of those boundaries. The exscriptions of text are attained at questioning everything in text, going to the limits, pushing the existing structures as far as possible - like a gesture directed at the anatomy of language. Writing as a body points to the anatomical/structural aspects of language, plays with its organization (modules are mixed and interstices reveal unveiled relations and different kinds of knowledge). Writing as a body (Nancy) is a similar idea of writing a writing that questions what writing is (Derrida), and of a language that communicates itself (Benjamin).

Such complexity of references and thinking tools offer interesting possibilities to the writing task involving artist researchers. The operations are to be located in the interstices, reorganizing, cutting and linking modules, just to follow Mika Elo's vocabulary. The exscription of this writing approximates it to the philosophical questioning attitude, and simultaneously removes it to any remaining intentions of becoming scientific - since for science it is inconceivable to adopt a permanent thinking about thinking habit, without letting this habit becoming self-destructive in the extreme. Therefore, writing is turned into a space of negotiation, where the artist is able to balance between the unique agency of artworks and the sometimes excessive sense associated to verbal thinking operations within the territory of artistic research. The enhanced platform is where Lawrence Weiner's conversation takes off, where the instituting act of Esa Kirkkopelto is deployed, or simply where artists bring to the public sphere their political, ethical and social questions in relation to art – Derrida's idea of

‘university without condition’ consists of this right of saying publicly everything, in a fictional or experimental way. According to Derrida, it is the notion of public space that simultaneously separates university from other institutions founded either in the right or in the duty of saying everything (for instance religious or psychoanalytical contexts), and what links it to literature (Derrida, 2001, p. 14).

I go to the initial points. As a basis of negotiation, this writing serves as interface between artistic practice and academic context, becoming the most visible face of artistic research, which also arises in the mentioned entanglement. However, the aim of this interface is not facilitating, neither simplifying one or the two worlds or the relation between them. In fact, writing is as complex as its sibling art production, each of them relating to the world and making sense in their own idiosyncratic ways. The scrutinizing exercise of artistic practice in a similar epistemological sense would be regarded as a displaced and outdated study – ‘who really is still trying to understand what art can and what art is nowadays?’ -, whereas questioning writing tasks seems to be in the order of the day for art-related-intellectuals. As previously said, the task of the translator – in this case, of the researcher – would be the depicting of such mechanics of making sense and reproducing them in the other’s territory, with the other’s tools and the other’s languages. Text in artistic research is not a work of art, but a work of research, yet there’s a chance that its exscription gestures and tireless inquiry render an increase of complexification, rather than a reduction. It also seems that artist researchers want to remove their writing from the eventual similarity of to an unchallenging description of a practice, or to a mere communication of art’s hidden senses. Just in case, they opt to engage in complexity. And, in their programmes, they are given time for that¹⁶⁰.

Writing as creating complex narratives

The initial impetus for the narrative serving as prologue in this thesis is largely deriving from these ideas of writing as a basis for negotiation turned into a complex interface between art and academy.

In Porto, when I first met Jeremy Diggle in *Conversations on Artistic Research* last year – me as organizer and Diggle as one of the invited speakers -, he has advised me in my research to just settle my frame and focus within it. Even if my frame is but a small square on the floor containing drips, spots of paint, dirt and dust. I could then just magnify one little spot over and over again, countless times, and become an expert in it. I’ve since the beginning felt very inspired by Diggle’s *modus operandi*, owing greatly to his defiant verbal and nonverbal

¹⁶⁰ For instance, the written research proposal of Hena-Riikka Halonen consists of a search for complexification in the interface of art and the world.

assemblages, savvy remarks and light-hearted style. It seems a good deal that this kind of artistic research expertise is like a journey towards going macro - from some microscopic, at first sight irrelevant, thing - and is necessarily bonded to the dimension of time. The learning experience of becoming an expert in the little spot is the more instigating as the more time is spent in looking at it, magnifying it, changing its circumstances, reproducing it, intervening on it, *experimenting* on it. "Professional artists feel that it is particularly important for them to be able to concentrate in a clearly defined theme over a longer period of time and with sufficient financial support to be able to work on it in terms of both depth and breadth" (Hannula; Suoranta & Vadén, 2005, p. 20). This seems to be a good motivation for the growing interest of artists in embarking in artistic research projects. They've found in the academic framework a harbor for independence – from the market and business world -, as odd as this may sound, and as controversial as it may look to the eyes of the skeptics who have been grabbing the arguments of autonomy and independence to reinforce their criticism. I have met a few artists to whom the time issue, or the opportunity to spend a few years dedicated to a single topic, has been the main reason to enroll in doctoral programmes (as say, for instance, Simo Kellokumpu, Sarah Hannula and Ato Malinda¹⁶¹). What Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén have slightly, yet significantly, noted in the 2005 quotation has actually turned to be one of the main motivations for this returning of artists into the academy today.

The construction of a complex narrative defines a background event where are supported the multiple layers posteriorly and consecutively added to the main structure. And so virtually does an artistic research project: after a main or a few setup research interests, a whole plot unfolds working on several related aspects of the initial inquiries. Magnus Bärtås has worked on an idea of "work stories" that very much resemble what I've been calling "complex narratives", as processes of artistic research. Bärtås, whose dissertation is titled *You Told Me – work stories and video essays* and was defended in Gothenburg University in 2010, says: "... work stories are telling stories about the making of arts, i. e. the methods, and in that sense they function as a small pieces of poetics in their own right", assigning an autonomous importance to writing in relation to art making. He continues: "Work stories often have concluding and encapsulating forms that strive to embrace complicated and large courses of events in a condensed form, in analogy for instance with the parable or the short-short fiction, or flash fiction, as it is sometimes called". At this point the *modus operandi* of Jeremy Diggle comes to my mind, as simultaneously I establish a smooth link to the narrative of "View of the sea at Scheveningen" of the "PROLOGUE". Still with Bärtås, he adds that "[t]hey [work stories]

¹⁶¹ Their entire edited transcriptions are available in the "Annexes".

may be narratives in the form of media descriptions, background stories or foreground stories, they may be instructions, scores, protocols or sometimes even just titles. But they can also have an extensive structure, be long, complex, essayistic, journalistic, or have the character of commentary tracks to films. Work stories speak primarily about processes, and processes are ongoing..." (Bärtås, 2013, pp. 110-111). – can't a written dissertation be a sort of a work story, convening all these dimensions in one platform of text?

Back to the February 2015 PhDArts Collegium at KABK The Hague – the first that I attended -, Jeremy Diggle lectured and spoke of his project dealing with abstract paintings disposed in easels and taken into real landscapes to be photographed. For some years now Diggle's been painting these unreferenced abstract images, which are quite incoherent if isolated, yet are endowed by a virtual meaning. It's their later re-contextualization and *mise en scène* that re-signifies them, that complexifies what was once only flat, and thus forces first unrelated images to a dialogue with external circumstances, with a third voice.

Also reporting to Diggle's presentation on the moon landing and photography, which he talked about previously in *Conversations on Artistic Research* in Porto in November 2014, artistic research seems indeed to give a great importance to the processes of making – the experience of making - rather than only to value a specific and final goal to which the research process would lead to. Noel Fitzpatrick suggested a comparison of the two terms "knowing and "knowledge" as a distinction in emphasis in a paper titled "Knowing : knowledge": "The 'Knowing' prompted in the title allows an exploration of something which is linguistically 'inconsistent', the grammatical form of the gerund in English allows this to come to the fore, where the 'ing' form acts as placeholder between the verbal and the nominal, to know and knowledge. The verb points towards the activity itself, the process in play, the nominal form 'knowledge' points towards the stability, posits the object of knowing as something stable or fixed. In one way this is the crux of the matter, moving from knowing to knowledge. The gerund which is neither verbal nor nominal and is always also temporary where the process is finalized by the thing itself, the process overcome by the product. The knowing which is inconsistent, contingent, unfinished, in the middle of the process acts as a reminder for where the construction of knowledge is held within the Art School" (2013, n/p).

The emphasis on process is also comprised in the "instituting" argument of Esa Kirkkopelto, to whom artistic research has a fundamental procedural quality, being the achieved invention acting as a "medium": something that "enables the change, the transition from one state to another, and that which displays it" (2011, n/p). It links to Mika Elo's remarks on Benjamin's theory of translation (1923), since this mediality "... mediates between known levels of perception and discourse and unknown ones that it simultaneously establishes, institutes by its

mediating function” (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p). This mediating nature is the reason why, according to Kirkkopelto, inventions can either be institutions, or just be institutionalized, in the cases they merely operate known levels of perception and discourse – or in the cases of “inferior translations” limited to the transference of content from one language to the other: “Above all, one must argue why and how the content and the medium of the message are mutually dependent, or even inseparable. This also implies that the research must, in one way or another, articulate or at least indicate its own mediality” (Elo, 2009, p. 23).

However, the emphasis on the process does not prevent research to stand for a few research aims into which it gradually delves into. It neither disclaims researchers to dive into the dark without a proper set of, so to speak, orientating lines. What it allows for is the opportunity to experience the process, in full and in each of its stages, understanding the gains that a certain degree of absorption brings to the quest for expertise entailed in artistic research.

The possibilities of writing as an instituting practice, as an artistic research endeavor, as a work story, as an exscription that questions the limits of writing while writing (or as an art practice that, like Baldessari’s art making, questions art while art is being made (Baldessari as quoted in Wesseling, 2009)¹⁶², exactly as artistic research that questions the artistic and the research as it unfolds) – are all enabled by the proposed approach to writing and research in and through the arts as a construction of narratives. Following the challenging path of translation, the artist researcher engages in the complexification of the world, through the reproduction of structures of making sense, rather than in transferring messages from and to several media. If artistic research is interested in the exploration of such procedure, as it seems to be, as a form of practice of research-minded artists, then one could perhaps include in the span of subjectivities that contemporary art is so keen of, this *artist-as-narrator*.

In any event, artistic research has been proving to convoy an intricate bound with the subject performing it: whereas writing and practice can be observed and discussed separately, and whereas their juxtaposition may have the looks of a utopian desire, they are connected by the unique character that produces both. Also, while openly focused in the artistic field as its ground of activity and where artistic research aims at intervening, the outcomes of research before and after a doctoral study in artistic research do not necessarily embody a visible material improvement, or an expanded transformative potential – the most decisive transformation occurs in the subject.

Following this realization it seems more adequate than ever to call on the subjectivity issue in relation to text production in artistic research. My argument here is that in parallel with the

¹⁶² John Baldessari famous saying: “When I am doing art, I am questioning how to do it”.

raised subjectivities of the artist-as-producer, and the artist-as-curator – or, to sum up with the term of Ricardo Basbaum, the “etc.-artists” (2003), is perhaps to be considered the artist-as-narrator as a new way to be a contemporary artist engaged with research. Or, eventually, as an equivalent term for artist researcher.

The relevance of this narrative construction strategy relies on the following remark of Magnus Bærtås: “A diverse methodology means to try and experiment with different roles, and by extension the interrogation of the functions of different roles. The role of a diverse methodology can be underlined in a time when tools are more and more common and pre-set or pre-configured. The majority of us are spending our lives (physically) doing the same thing, the same movements in front of a computer. The most basic form of a work story is the media description” (Bærtås, 2013, p. 108) – a description that is made present as the work story is made present.

As a note, I do not intent to reduce artistic research to the elaboration of complex narratives, or to characterize it as such. My intention is more that of comprehending in a term (artist-as-narrator) some significant proposals performed under the label of artistic research. Without aiming to standardize the richness, variety and uniqueness of artistic research in fixed methodology, this term rises from observation of examples in the field, and works more as a suggestion of a procedure that is concerned with the duality of theory and practice, and keeps the tension alive, for the good sake of the field. Two different ways of approaching theory and practice in artistic research are contained in the possibilities of such narrative making, either as a reproduction of the operation of the practice using textual language, or keeping both autonomous, making justice to their own specificities, and displacing their entanglement to the level of subjects – where, finally, theory and practice can eventually meet.

Reflexive dimension and contemporary art

I am interested in ascertaining the relations established between the writing procedures of artist researchers and the activities taking place in the contemporary art field. Concerning the forms in which this link is set up, I have come to the suggestion of narrative-construction as possibly a new idiosyncrasy of the meeting of artistic research and artistic practice fields.

As previously mentioned, writing tasks are perceived as one of the critical aspects of research for artists in academy, who generally undertake the task with initial resistance, sometimes never releasing their opposition to what is seen as an unreasonable academic regulation.

Other students find out ways to relate to the writing processes that help them to extract useful insights to their artistic practice. I’ve questioned Janneke Wesseling about the expectations she had in future usability of the academic writing skills by her students after they graduate.

Did they incorporate writing processes in their artistic practice in such a way that these are not anymore limited to an academic requirement, but actually moved on to art making territory? It persists, at least, the hope that the 'becoming an academic' brings with it the practice and mastering of such writing skills in the future, as tells Janneke Wesseling: "So there is a very interesting line, which I really love, when you receive your piece of paper, the big thing. It's a very happy moment. The Rector Magnificus of the University has a ceremonial speech. There is also a personal speech, but part of his ceremonial is the same for everybody and the last sentence is... I do not have the exact phrase, but the last sentence is 'And please never forget the responsibility that you took upon yourself to honour the academic...' practice or research, something like that. And I think this is quite beautiful because it means that once you have received the highest grade that exists, you bear a responsibility to further the community that you are now a part of"¹⁶³. But it is perhaps too early to affirm the students incorporate or not the academic writing skills, since until now only two PhDArts students have defended their dissertation. Accordingly, we can only guess.

In order to have an insightful perception of the relation of writing and contemporary art making, one has also to consider the content being conveyed in textual language. Beyond the formats employed – from where I've more seriously considered the narrative production – the message, in the terms of Walter Benjamin (1923a, 1923b), is also important to account. In this respect it becomes relevant to briefly relate the ideas of *information* and *knowledge*.

According to the widespread DIKW pyramid¹⁶⁴, information precedes knowledge and the latter is a development of the first. Knowledge society is about a society in which information has been processed, and the processing validated. Calling on Bill Readings explanation of the contemporary university – as a wrecked university nowadays, in respect to its Modern basis (1996) –, the fact that this institution has become an international bureaucratic enterprise puts the spotlight of its action in the validation function of information processed by students – or customers, to meet Readings' emphatic vision. What really circulates is information – it is the currency of this system. What embodies the really valuable capital is knowledge. And information only becomes knowledge when it generates meaningful operations at the level of the subject. In artistic terms, the making of knowledge is attained to production of meaning through materiality - "It might sound like a cliché, but artists do know how to put the disquiet into play and turn it into something potential... it is about making and giving shape to meanings, again and again and again. Art practices permanently offer the puzzlement of the

¹⁶³ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

¹⁶⁴ DIKW – Data, Information, Knowledge, Wisdom, sometimes elaborated as a pyramid, other times as a line in continuum, where the posterior depends on the previous.

new by detecting, in the making of art, how individuals relate to the materiality of their time, that is, how they exist in it" (Alves, 2014, p. 6).

President of Manifesta Foundation Hedwig Fijen said that "With the transformation of Manifesta 6 into an art school, it is worth asking whether educational objectives might have been at the back of our minds all along, as one of the principal factors conditioning our desire for a free and open exchange of information" (Fijen, 2006, n/p). She couples up "educational objectives" with the "desire for a free and open exchange of information". Importantly is at play the indication of an exchange of information as resulting from educational endeavors. This gives an alternative and quite radical perspective of art education – and consequently of artistic research –, as a valid and potential territory in the pursuit of freedom, open, exchange and information – a territory of circulation of information to be assimilated afterwards and processed in the subjects' structures, instead of education as a procedure of scoring knowledge (processed information). Talking to Anton Vidokle about *Art beyond the art market* (2006), Boris Groys, at a certain point, says that: "The concept of education presupposes some privileged knowledge that has to be transmitted from the teacher to the students. I don't believe that we can speak about such kinds of knowledge in the context of contemporary art. But, of course, it is useful for an artist to be informed about what happens in the art world and also in the world of politics, theory and cultural studies" (p. 69). Groys advances here the idea of information and compares it to the inclusion/exclusion duality encompassed in the idea of education. He adds that "The concept of information is usually regarded as being something more profane than a concept of education. But, actually, well-informed people can be pretty inventive and effective—even if, and maybe precisely because, they are not especially well educated" (p. 69). Exchange of information could thus be taken as the premise of a new art school – and also as the content conveyed in writing in artistic research –, where learning from example is nowadays misplaced in academic strategies, although definitely having occupied a very relevant and continuous role in the history of art education. Nowadays it just seems nonsensical to ask art students to be disruptive practitioners and alternative creators when all their education is designed from the principle of absorbing privileged information from privileged professors and privileged artists, all partaking in the knowledge economy embodied by the institutional framework. Groys does not see that the contemporary art academy has a chance to not endow the *status quo* of contemporary art into its students' aspirations, instead of disrupt and break with it, while the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy is kept as the basis of the educational conception. The same vision seems to be considered by Jan Verwoert in *School's Out!-? Arguments to challenge or defend the institutional boundaries of the academy*: "Instead of providing a genuine alternative to the market, the ideas about making art and being an

artist entertained by people inside the academy are very often just a distorted version of the dominant principles of the outside art world, with the effect that much of the art made in academies only reflects the desperate desire to approximate the standards which students believe to be the current status quo of gallery art” (Verwoert, 2006b, pp. 1-2). Instead of stressing the difference between the school and the market, these “outwardly more progressive institutions” bring into the academy active and successful professionals which, unavoidably, will not only familiarize students with the status quo and inscribe in them the desire to achieve that status quo, but questionably the desire to surpass it – “The questionable outcome is that these students then emerge from their courses equipped with a ready-made knowledge of the latest aesthetics and terminologies of critical discourse, but nothing to contribute that would make a substantial difference within the field—since to make a difference is something you only learn when you take the time to grasp and confront the traditions and conventions of art practice and discourse” (Verwoert, 2006b, p. 2).

A model founded in exchange of information has, on the other hand, the potential to envisage art school from a different perspective, where art cannot be taught¹⁶⁵, and so it aims at providing the conditions for creative practice and for instigating conversations in a networked environment, instead of focusing in handing on knowledge as a product: “The uncertainty of the status of work done in the academy... implies a huge potential, as it allows for experimentation with working models and forms of production that are not sanctioned by conventional standards. The academy can, therefore, become a site for unsanctioned forms of production when it is activated as a local support structure for an international discourse between marginal cultural producers and intellectuals. In this spirit, the academy must be transformed into an open platform that offers a viable alternative to the museum and gallery system through the integration and redefinition of the functions of art education, production, presentation, circulation and documentation” (Verwoert, 2006b, pp. 3-4).

Until the 60s art was also immersed in the production of objects, sustaining formal concerns and, more openly or less explicitly, artists supported the idea of the object’s aura.

Interestingly, it was the rise of Pop Art, a movement intimately associated with consumerism, which set the route of a dematerialization of art. This different experience of materialism of artistic objects, more straightforward than previous Modernist examples, and covered by the appropriation strategies, adopted a critical attitude and reflective inquiries along the *praxis*. When there is nothing in the appearance of objects that distinguish art from everyday products – as with Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Box*, “... then the meaning of art ceases to be taught by

¹⁶⁵ This is anything but new. Walter Gropius had this motto underlying the project of Bauhaus.

example. According to Danto, art makes the transition from experience to thought. Art becomes conceptual and one needs to turn to philosophy for an understanding of art (Danto, 1997)" (Pellapaisiotis, 2006, pp. 82-83). The intersection of this virtual *new materialism*, which encourages, on the other hand, dematerialization by calling upon philosophy into art practice, is even reinforced by the advent of Conceptual art in the 60s and 70s. Conceptual artists have decisively broken with the production of artistic objects for pleasure and contemplation, breaching the market perversion of Modernist motto of 'art for art's sake', and proposing works that merged with the everyday life as events or dematerialized objects. The emphasis is from here put into language, and the influence of Structuralism is also remarkable in the elaborations proposed by Conceptualism. Additionally, the fact that the object of art has been dematerialized and the everyday life incorporated into artistic practice has opened space to value the process and to perceive art as event, instead of a palpable object with definite outlines. In these grounds information circulates with more fluidity.

Contemporary art has definitely went far from Modernist intents, and accordingly the art school is also trying to endorse the new circumstances and remove the emphasis on the production of commodities to be placed in the art market for admiral and consumption. In this sense, reflective practices, events of discussion - where education has been replaced by information, so that the presupposed hierarchy and inclusion/exclusion dichotomy disappears -, debates, and writing endeavors have also been strategies incorporated in the redesign of the art school. This puts into question the very purpose of the art school, given that no school teaches you to be experimental and to make your everyday life object of art.

The advent of artistic research is also a break with Modernism, but no longer following dematerialization as a goal – more as a context for its emergence. Instead, the breaking performed by artistic research is a re-enactment of an aspect already evidenced in Conceptual art, that is, according to Magnus Bårtås, the necessity "to look at the total signifying activities of an artist, as Joseph Kosuth puts it (when commenting on Ad Reinhardt's work, which for Kosuth did not just consist of his paintings but also his lectures and seminars)", or what Peter Osborne calls "propositional content" (Bårtås, 2013, p. 107). It is not a matter of considering text or all this "propositional content" and "signifying activities" artworks in themselves, but to have out their articulations with the artistic practice and to contextualize their production of meaning the present circumstance of the knowledge society. This excursion has to account to a problematically associated consequence, that is the emergence of a kind of *new materialism* – the production resulting from the understanding and problematization of the narrative of

dematerialization, also understood as a sort of “commodification of research”, as mentioned by Janneke Wesseling in our interview¹⁶⁶.

At stake is the use of text in an artistic context, but not as an artwork itself – which would not be new anyway, since the “protocol-like” works of Hamish Fulton, for instance, or the texted sculptures of Lawrence Weiner, just to give two examples. And in this sense the art school rescues its value and, in a certain extent, introduces it in the art world merging it with artistic practice – sometimes in parallel, sometimes in complementation.

Thinking about these issues is not only a task for art education and educators and pedagogues. In the twentieth-first century it is a task for artists in the first place, since the intertwining between contemporary art practice and pedagogical inclinations related to communicability and public-ness of the works of art, are more entangled than ever. The concerns addressed in the preparation of Manifesta 6 prove exactly that. But it is a statement from the 70s by Douglas Heubler that seems to synthesize the situation: “What I say is part of the artwork. I don’t look to critics to say things about my work. I tell them what it’s about. People deny words have anything to do with art. I don’t accept that. They do. Art is a source of information” (as quoted in Bårtås, 2013, p. 107).

In the sequence of the interpenetration of text and contemporary art, it seemed of utter relevance to this study to plunge deeper in trying to detect the impact of these self-reflexive practice and its educational concerns embodied in artistic research in the most important art events. In order to ascertain the influence of artistic research in contemporary art it seems logic to look for it in large scale happenings such as Manifesta, Documenta, Biennials and associated acts and discursivity.

Interested in the legitimation of this inquiry, I have asked frequently my interviewees whether they could perceive an impact of the field of artistic research in contemporary art or, otherwise, it was indiscernible. Answers were often centered in commentary on the processes of art making, kind of trying to distinguish different practices in academy and in the art world, or either focused in differences between trained artists and traditional ones. Examples were majorly residual, and none of the interviewees risked generalizing the impact of artistic research in the contemporary art world, giving, instead quite vague or seemingly mislead answers. Asked whether he thought that artistic research had impact on the art world, Simo Kellokumpu¹⁶⁷ mentioned that one of his colleagues is developing a kind of a tool within the doctoral group, to apply afterwards in choreography. For Simo this tool sort of evidenced the impact of artistic research in the art world. Ato Malinda has done an interesting remark for the

¹⁶⁶ More information in the entire edited transcription available in the “Annexes”.

¹⁶⁷ Simo Kellokumpu is a performance artist, choreographer and doctoral student at Theatre Academy, Helsinki.

contemporary artists, claiming to know some artists from other places who do research for their projects (although are not part of any doctoral programme), in contrast to other more traditional artists who “don’t necessarily do any research, but sort of go day to day and produce the work like that”. Following this differentiation, it sounds licit to take research as a learnt contemporary skill – something the more traditional artists miss but the educated artists acquire in their institutional training.

THE IMPACT OF ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN CONTEMPORARY ART

The establishment of a field of knowledge cannot disregard the consequences at play of its activities. After all it is for the sake of these consequences that a field is organized, in the premise that their contribution is valuable at some levels. A status report of artistic research has to ascertain how artist researchers are shaping their field and, for its intertwining with the artistic practice, it also proper to consider the contributions directed to the art world.

I have conducted a few interviews in which, among other things, I have inquired a few people involved in the clusters of artistic research in Helsinki and in The Hague about their opinion on the impact of artistic research in contemporary art. As I've stated previously, the answers were never conclusive, sometimes misled in their focus, and rarely straight to the point of the questioned impact. Henceforth I have decided to look for the impact of artistic research in contemporary art by observing the visibility, influence and transformation of strategies related to practices of research (educational settings, writing tools, knowledge production, etc.) in large-scale events in the art world, among which biennials are a significant instance.

However, the signs of artistic research that I am looking for are perhaps to be found in discursive subtleties of those large-scale exhibitions, rather than, for instance, in the formal penetration of text into exhibitions, in the way conceptual artists did. Text worked as a material, as visual matter, or textual supports, for as much as they resemble research procedures, they are aiming at a different thing. Text as art is a different path of what artistic research intends to pursue. Artistic research is not art, even though it is sustained in a very close relationship, especially on the levels of resistance and criticality.

e-flux conversation *Why has there been such a boom in art book fairs?*, from January 2015, accounts the subject of art book fairs, and the question of why have these become so widespread and popular among artists and institutions. It's true. In the Faculty of Fine Arts of Porto I've visited more fanzine shows than exhibitions in the museum upstairs. That's also true that I am not the most assiduous exhibition consumer kind of person, but regardless of that fact I have a quite vivid memory of covered tables with d.i.y. zines and journals. These shows have been mostly organized by design students and by the printmaking department, who take these media as experimental opportunities for their technology mastery.

The e-flux conversation accounts the view of the director of Offprint Paris⁴⁵, Yannick Bouillis, on the popularity of art book fairs. He imputes to the decreased control artists have of how their work is sold and exhibited, the reason of their increased interest in publishing as a way of maintaining their artistic independence. For them "publishing seems to offer an authentic,

autonomous space within the art community” (e-flux, 2015), and therefore can be taken as a strategy for resistance. Due to their material conditions, the fact that they are books and journals and so can comprise text, also potentially relate these objects with research. But they are not necessarily research. As said, the cited events correspond mostly to initiatives developed by designers in training and to printmaking artists exploring the possibilities and restraints of the book as a creative support. Although in the presence of book devices, at stake is mostly aesthetic experimentalism, which *per se* do not bring the intended kind of artistic research to the forefront.

Back to the e-flux conversation, Jack Segbars¹⁶⁸ has added the important remark speaking of the book as a medium for art: “It provides for a quasi-autonomous space in which the parameters of the possibilities for production, formerly attributed (or at least connected) to the white-cube format, are condensed into the form of a book. This is also furthered by the formal qualities a book provides for: as combined platform for reflection, documentation and production/publication, mirroring the constellation of qualities in the post-conceptual age” (e-flux, 2015). Publishing may contain resistance and disruptive potential, until it has also become institutionalized and commodified in industry and in these proliferating events. However, Bouillis remark is reverberating; one of the strongest mobiles of artistic research is the concern artists have gained towards the public-ness of their art works. In an empowering perspective, the skills provided by research-like practice equip artists with possibilities for establishing dialogues with these institutions of spectatorship and of curatorship. This is one of the main reasons leading artists to enroll in doctoral programmes: to have control over the public-ness of their artworks. In the interview I have done with Yota Ioannidou we have approached this topic, when I asked her opinion about the reason for artists to be returning to the academy at later stages for doctoral degrees. She said: “I think it’s a good way to emancipate artists by having the need from curators or theoreticians to address their own issues. So you can really build the skills with which you can address the problems with. Address, you know, what you’re doing. I think in a PhD this is very crucial. Because we talk about knowledge production and all of these discourses around the knowledge production. I think it’s quite challenging how we can do it, what are we proposing through that process, as artists. This is interesting for me. It’s very good that the creator to be able to develop some theory, instead of leaving to other people to do that”¹⁶⁹. To this respect, Janneke Wesseling stresses the “empowering” potential that such learning programme provides to artists and scholars: “I think that is very important and also

¹⁶⁸ Jack Segbars is a graphic artist, curator, critic and writer. He is also a student of the doctoral programme of PhDArts of KABK The Hague/Leiden University.

¹⁶⁹ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Yota Ioannidou. The entire edited transcription is in the “Annexes”.

empowering, perhaps, for artists - but who knows maybe also for scholars, but certainly for artists - to have access to the highest degree in art education. ... I think it's very important that artists have open access to this highest degree and also to this scholarly debate. It's not that that's the most important dialogue or debate, but it's very significant for politicians, for people that make the policy for museums and for cultural institutions that they know that artists are also able to partake in an academic discussion"¹⁷⁰.

Books, writing and reading, are emblems for theory making and sympathy for theoretical approaches. However, embarking in books/fanzines/journals as art is not *per se* a guarantee that a communicational language is being channeled, or that the "constellation of qualities in the post-conceptual age" mentioned by Segbars has been met. Despite the similarities and the tradition implied by the format, these objects are assumed as works of art as well as the processes, and it is not the similarity of supports that make these art book fairs, events of artistic research. So when I say I am looking for signs of artistic research in exhibitions, I do not mean this aesthetic resemblance, but transformations occurred at the levels of discursivity. Therefore I will not highlight book fairs as events where artistic research could be affirmatively presaged or endorsed. Art book fairs are nonetheless spreading and increasing in frequency, and in one way or another they might be lurking for the potential in books' format for the hybrid of, according do Segbars, "reflection, documentation and production/publication" (e-flux, 2015), but they are also a commodity in current day, since their physicality is a sort of artistic whim in face of the endless digital possibilities. I will instead look for the discursivity in the backdrop of the big exhibitions.

Something more substantial than the spreading of art book fairs for the ascertainment of artistic research is comprised in what says Sarat Maharaj: "The proliferation of the biennials across the world signals a deeper shift. In terms of the Culture Industry and mass art-culture consumption they plug into consumerist capitalism. In terms of the global assembly line of today's Creative Industries, they are like 'Labs' of innovation and entrepreneurial acumen plugged into the postindustrial world of manufacture where all production is billed as creative labour" (Maharaj, 2009, n/p). Unlike Creative Industries, where works every kind of professional except experimental artists¹⁷¹, biennials and similar art fairs and international exhibitions are *par excellence* showrooms of professional artists. European Manifesta and Documenta of Kassel compete directly in prominence with the most important biennales of São Paulo, Venice, Gwangju, and Istanbul. These international exhibitions have been long time

¹⁷⁰ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is in the "Annexes".

¹⁷¹ A commentary made during the lecture of Robert Hewison on the symposium *Culture 3.0: Prosuming the Art Academy* organized by the research group of the Lectorate Art Theory & Practice at the University of the Arts The Hague, held on March 2014 at KABK.

regarded as the milestones of the most up-to-date and the most impactful artistic achievements. Also occurrences in all of them have affected the growing field of artistic research. I am interested now in perceiving whether their development has also absorbed any of the artistic research contributions. Nevertheless this chapter does not aim at a fully comprehensive list of all striking and influential events on the subject. Mostly for the sake of chronology, I have note down a few events that more or less reinforce a symptomatic growing interest in artistic research.

- 2002 - Documenta 11 2001-2002
- 2003 - *The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by An Artist* 2003 – Jens Hoffman (artist Ricardo Basbaum, Tino Sehgal, Liam Gillick, etc)
- 2006 - Manifesta 6 2006
 - *unitednationsplaza*, Berlin
 - *Nightschool*, Mexico City and New York
 - *The Building*, Berlin
- 2008 - *A Certain Ma-Ness* 2008 – Sint-Lukas Academy in Brussels + MaKHU Utrecht School of Visual Arts and Design
 - 2009 - *Becoming Bologna* 2009
 - 2010 - *The Academy Strikes Back*, 2010
- 2008 - 7th Shanghai Biennial 2008
- 2010 - Manifesta 8 2010: *As the Academy Turns*
- 2011 - Georgian Pavilion at Venice Biennale 2011: *Any-Medium-Whatever*
- 2012 - Documenta 13 2012: *Doing Research*
- 2012 - 1st Tblisi Triennial 2012
- 2012 . 9th Shanghai Biennial 2012: *Amsterdam Pavilion – Temporary Autonomous Research*
- 2013 - 13th Istanbul Biennial 2013: *Joyful Wisdom*
- 2014 - 9th Taipei Biennial 2014: *Aesthetic Jam*
- 2015 - Research Pavilion at Venice Biennale 2015 – Anita Seppä + Henk Slager + Jan Kaila
- 2015 - 5th Guangzhou Triennial 2015

Except for Documenta 11, *The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by an Artist*, Manifesta 6 and subsequent *unitednationsplaza*, *Nightschool* and *The Building*, all of the remnant selected events have the hand of Henk Slager. Henk Slager is a widely known artistic research theoretician, founder of EARN, currently teaching in Utrecht, and internationally networked.

Accordingly to this small list, he is in varied ways introducing artistic research in contemporary art since, at least, 2008.

A Certain Ma-Ness (2008) was a symposium organized in Amsterdam focused on master programmes in art academies, which developed to two other projects, the 2009 *Becoming Bologna*, and the *The Academy Strikes Back* in 2010.

Becoming Bologna, organized by MaHKU in collaboration with EARN, Sint-Lukas Brussels, Università IUAV di Venezia and Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, happened in the context of the 53rd Venice Biennale, and focused on the trend toward academization in art education. It was comprised of a public intervention and a parallel symposium.

Henk Slager was part of the academic staff that co-curated the 7th Shanghai Biennial, in 2008.

In Murcia, during Manifesta 8 in 2010, Henk Slager was involved in the organization of a Winter School of EARN called *As the Academy Turns*, where the topics of academization in art education, and the PhD programmes emerging in Europe were the topics discussed: "... a unique experiment at the intersection of artistic research, contemporary art, and the new art academy practices that have emerged across Europe in the last decade" (EARN Admin, 2010). Georgian Pavilion at the 2011 Venice Biennial was curated by Slager for a solo exhibition *Any-Medium-Whatever*, by artist Tamara Kvesitadze.

Doing Research, at Documenta 13 in 2012, was organized by Henk Slager and EARN, and comprised a publication of the same name (by FAFA/KuvA), a symposium and research workshops (That consist of PhD students presenting their research projects).

The first edition of the Tbilisi Triennial was co-curated by Henk Slager. In the website of The Biennial Foundation one can read: "... CCA Tbilisi has recently initiated to organize an idiosyncratic dissemination platform: a Triennial not only implying visual art, but also including a focus on art education and its related forms of research. The notion of *Offside Effect* can be understood in various metaphoric modes. For example, in the mode of artistic thinking breaking through formalized frameworks of knowledge production. Or in the mode of agonistic, heterogeneous forms of laboratory-based education remedying homogenizing approaches. The ultimate ambition of the Tbilisi Triennial *Offside Effect* is to map a variety of practises in the form of activities, economics, methodologies, and strategies all connected with the experimental field of artistic thinking"¹⁷².

Henk Slager participation in the 9th Shanghai Biennial, in 2012, was the curating of The Amsterdam Pavilion with the project-exhibition *Temporary Autonomous Research*. In *The Pleasure of Research*, Slager informs that "The project Temporary Autonomous Research

¹⁷² Retrieved from <http://www.biennialfoundation.org/biennials/tbilisi-triennial-georgia/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

(DARE # 6, Utrecht, 2011), poses the question whether artistic research is only possible because of the temporary, autonomous zone institutionally made possible by the academy. A space that is perhaps the last location where - in the form of a semiotic guerilla and knowledge hacking - a protest can be filed against the ubiquitous visual culture and the opportunist diktat of the creative industries. This is in line with Hakim Bey's Temporal Autonomous Zone: 'As soon as the TAZ is named (represented, mediated), it must vanish, it will vanish, leaving behind it an empty husk, only to spring up again somewhere else, once again invisible because undefinable in terms of the Spectacle'" (2012, p.18).

For the 13th Istanbul Biennial in 2013, Henk Slager curated the parallel event *Joyful Wisdom*, where were addressed the topics published afterwards in the *Experimental Aesthetics* number of Metropolis M Books, in 2014. In the website of e-flux the project is introduced in the lines: "How to avoid institutional routine and academic rigor is a question emerging time and again in current discussions on the topic of artistic research. Therefore, the project *Joyful Wisdom* intends to address the original spirit of the field; that is, artistic research as a radical, experimental playground. From that perspective, the project presents artistic research as a topical interpretation of Nietzsche's reflections on *Joyful Wisdom* (*Gaya Scienza*): an untimely plea for a different form of thinking detaching knowledge from the leveling tendency of classification and reinvolving speculative and symbolic forms of understanding. Pending questions, then, are: How can artistic research as a situation-based thinking process escape from the disciplining logic of knowledge production? Should the strategic form of an epistemic guerrilla be deployed?"¹⁷³.

The same issues were further developed in the occasion of the 9th Taipei Biennial, in 2014, in the satellite project *Aesthetic Jam*, also published in the same issue of Metropolis M Books. About *Aesthetic Jam*, the Biennial Foundation informs that: "On the ground floor of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (Gallery D) they [Hongjohn Lin and Henk Slager] organized a workshop environment that will continually be redesigned and discussed by the participating artists... After the opening, five artists will produce new work in the exhibition space for a period of three weeks... Prior to the opening of the exhibition, a public seminar will take place at which the participating artists will further discuss their works and the group presentation"¹⁷⁴.

The 2015 5th Guangzhou Triennial is still to open by the end of the year. The Research Pavilion of this year's Venice Biennale is running and I will get back to it later.

¹⁷³ Retrieved from <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/joyful-wisdom/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹⁷⁴ Retrieved from: <http://www.biennialfoundation.org/2014/09/aesthetic-jam-is-a-project-curated-by-hongjohn-lin-and-henk-slager-in-close-consultation-with-nicolas-bourriaud-curator-of-the-2014-edition-of-the-taipei-biennial/>. Last access on 04.06.2015.

What's intended in this chapter is to join the larger account of artistic research contributing with a captation of influencing symptoms and a narration on the consequences that the developments in the research undertaken in and through art have over the more general, powerful and also institutionalized art world. By probing the presence of research directions and activity knots one should be able to depict an inter-relation. In the case of an inter-relation then consequences and causes are permanently exchanging roles so that all match the morphology of symptoms.

Biennials are turning points to the developments of contemporary art. One of the greatest ways to keep up to date with the latest achievements is to visit these exhibitions and to read its catalogues. The amount of critical theory both resulting from and triggering the artistic proposals at the exhibitions is also surely worth a reading for a more complex engagement. As with international prizes (the Oscar, BAFTA, Golden Lion, Golden Bear, the Pritzker Prize or Turner Prize), participation in events like Venice Biennale is statutory and career launching. Despite the consumerist capitalism and neoliberal usage of culture of the present circumstances, making biennials a tourist attraction and entertaining event for society, its impact in the art world is unavoidable, both in the construction of discourse and in the resuming of the state of affairs. For that reason the ascertainment of artistic research has to be aware of these high-ranking exhibitions.

These large-scale exhibitions are not exempted of the instrumentalization of culture that neoliberal politics have been promoting, and from here derives the necessity of increased attention and self-attention towards the object of biennales as an object-institution and into the institutions it hosts. The Biennial Foundation is the institution leading the network of biennials, and each of the biennials hosts an amount of institutions that institute and institutionalize alike. At stake are not only legitimating probations at the charge of acceptance and exclusion of artists and artworks, but also the institution of spectatorship, of pedagogy, and of aesthetics.

Esa Kirkkopelto's notion of "invention" – "Artistic research makes up inventions which, insofar as they are of public utility, are also (at least potentially) new institutions, and thus carry out critical changes in the institutional status quo. As a consequence, the criteria for evaluation would consist of considering to what extent an artist-researcher is able to present their invention as an institution" (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p) – is pertinent to this respect. A quality criterion – if we have to utter them at some point – of artistic and artist research outcomes alike is thus relating to the degree of iconoclasm. Not to the literally prosecution of iconoclasm, but much more to its metaphorical realization. The iconoclast consequence of one of these acts is to be felt in the ability to establish the dialogue with the surrounding structures

as it enters the public domain. By instituting their inventions, artistic research projects aspire to shake the established institutions and propose term transformations.

In view of this state of things, resistance is not anymore simply an option, yet it comes as a necessity. And the resistance to neoliberal cogitations is never advisable to be applied neither from deaf denial nor evading arrays. In this context resistance is a bit more complex than that, when hybridity, ambiguity and complexity populate all over the settling of neoliberalism.

Therefore research as a medium seems to answer this urgency within the art world, since its practice aims at self-awareness and is interested in developing an acute self-reflexive vein.

Closer critical views to the process of institutionalization and its implied circumstances, as well as to the exercise of time regarded from the point of view of the researcher, that will follow in this chapter, are two possible lines of the self-reflexive and resistance veins of artistic research.

At biennials and art exhibitions artists do statements. Their works function as statements in themselves and are thrown into the art world. Some artists offer additionally written statements, which slightly opens the otherwise hermetic artistic statement into a possible discussion, but it's not usually an artistic practice that they do that. There is a long tradition of artists resisting to what is regarded as academic praxis where reading and writing are comprised, that also transpires within the framework of research for a PhD, like PhDArts, for instance, where this resistance to writing and the establishment of a dialogue with supervisors and peers is not an easily acquired routine. In our interview, Erik Viskil has done the following remark: "Do you find resistance by these artists that engage in this programme in the writing and in the reading and in these routines?", I asked. Viskil answered: "Yes, however not persisting, and certainly not negative, it's all very intelligent". Some artists still take to themselves the role of resisting to everything and of stating that their art is their discourse. "... some would like to do it completely their own way or they don't know the conventions... With some it could be that they fear everything that is governed by rules... Wjm Kok [the first student of PhDArts that graduated] refused to commit to certain conventions, arguing that he is allowed to because he is an artist, but as an artist he wrote a PhD thesis... he takes a strong position as a researcher being an artist"¹⁷⁵. And Viskil completes, relating to the experience of Wjm Kok at PhDArts: "There are still no explicit rules, but I think that somewhere in the back of the minds of the people involved there will be the idea that it is difficult to have someone say: "I don't have to account for anything because I'm an artist". And when they say: "In a doctorate thesis we expect you to account for your assertions, it's a discursive treatise". "Yes, but that is not my problem, it's your problem, because I'm an artist." That's what he said, and

¹⁷⁵ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Erik Viskil at KABK, The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

it is interesting, I think it's very interesting, because that is what contemporary art is"¹⁷⁶. It can do everything that other people do as well, or could do as well, but artists do it in their own way, according to their personal standards".

But, according to Gerald Bast, "The researcher is not a force of nature that creates out of him or herself, so that nature expresses itself through him or her. The rhetoric of genius makes no sense for researchers. The right to research is achieved by one's own skills and the knowledge of prior work. Every picture, every sentence, every sound is related to those that came before it. Research is embedded in a historical and social context" (2011, p. 186).

PhDArts, however, adverts that "[w]ithout language it is impossible to enter into a discourse, so the invention of a language in which we can communicate with one another about research in art and design and through which we can evaluate the research is just as important as devising a viable research methodology" (p.3)¹⁷⁷.

In the context of the European project CICA - Changing Identities and Contexts in the Arts: Artistic Research as the New Paradigm for the Arts, a development of the early collaboration between Mika Hannula, Jan Kaila and Roger Palmer, was organized the seminar *Writing with Practice*, held in 2012 in Gothenburg. Magnus Bårtås participated with *Work stories revisited*, where he refers to the work of his doctoral dissertation. In his presentation he points out the absence of a clear border between inner text and outer text – "the world's discourse surrounding the book" -, and explains the relation of text and paratext, as follows: "Paratext is informed by peritext – which consists of spatial and material aspects of a book as format, layout, title page, paper, cover design, etc. – together with epitext, which consists of the author's interviews, conversations, correspondence, diaries, seminars, presentations, and retrospective comments" (2013, p. 106). Bårtås then establishes a parallel and moves paratext to the artistic context, making the equivalence of the peritext with the spatial and physical aspects of the artwork. "When it comes to the epitext we... can add for instance media descriptions and press messages. In the art context one has to emphasize the oral talks, and discourse-staging activities in general. An institutional shift has opened up for a range of discourse-staging events within the public and private art institutions (often inspired by self-organized structures and artists group's initiatives outside the institutions): workshops, seminars, screenings, discussions, think-tanks, debates, lectures, residency programs, etc. These activities sometimes function as side events, as main attractions of the exhibitions, or as 'replacement' for exhibitions. They can all be seen as a part of the epitext" (Bårtås, 2013, pp.

¹⁷⁶ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Erik Visikl at KABK, The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

¹⁷⁷ This is a fragment of the Handbook of PhDArts. Since the document is not publicly available, I will not include it in the "Bibliography".

106-107). And so is where artistic research finds its territory. It is in the epitex of grand-scale art events that I will attempt to ascertain the influence of artistic research in the art world.

Knowledge in contemporary art

The query that crops up right away with the idea of “visual art as knowledge production” is: “what sort of knowledge?” Hard on its heels “What marks out its difference, its otherness?” Should we not rather speak of non-knowledge - activity that is neither hard-nosed know-how nor its ostensible opposite, ignorance? The question is especially pertinent in today’s expanding knowledge economy that we should not only see as a “technological development” but as an emerging overall condition of living that I prefer to speak of as the “grey-matter” environs (Maharaj, 2009b, n/p).

In his coverage of the press conference of Documenta 11, Thomas McEvelley reported on e-flux that “Each of artistic director Okwui Enwezor’s six co-curators - Sarat Maharaj, Octavio Zaya, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez and Mark Nash - spoke briefly, followed by Enwezor himself. Maharaj identified the point of art today as ‘knowledge production’ and the point of this exhibition as ‘thinking the other’”. McEvelley continues: “He [Okwui Enwezor] spoke of the emergence of post-colonial identity, and said that he and his colleagues had aimed at something much larger than an art exhibition: they were seeking to find out what comes after imperialism” (2002). Two important things are to retain from here: the status report by Sarat Maharaj and the aspirations of making a Documenta “much larger than an art exhibition”. The two things are at interplay. It is the recognition that a commitment with “knowledge production” is only achievable by an expansion of the preconception of the exhibition. If art aims at the construction of discourse and meta-discourse, then the exhibition of art settings have to change accordingly and meet knowledge production requirements as well.

To say that today’s art is concerned with knowledge production is not, however, very precise. The uncertainty, confusion and contradictions extending the debate of artistic research as a field of knowledge production are largely attached to the very hesitations of artistic practice in this domain. No answer exists to what is knowledge produced by art, and similarly it does not exist a satisfactory answer to what is knowledge in general either. The many attempts to get to a general understanding of the idea of knowledge always stress one aspect or another in

accordance to the field of expertise, giving to what was supposedly a general view an undesirable inclination. Definitions of knowledge would then variably prioritize objectivity, methodology, applicability or explanation, among other aspects, each of them debatable, and each of them incomplete *per se*.

Nevertheless, one does not need to know clearly what knowledge is to produce knowledge. And one does not need to define art to make art. Institutions that produce knowledge, namely academic institutions, do so after the fulfillment of a set of rules which, by definition, result in a product that is institutionally recognized as knowledge. This institutional procedure exempts the producers of knowledge to fix and inscribe an idea of knowledge in the essence of the objects produced. The 'knowledgeability' of these objects is not intrinsic but set by external entities, the institutional stance and the regulations it approved.

Similarly, artistic research is produced by institutions with recognized authority to produce artistic research, such as PhD programmes and research projects of institutes – it's in this logic that artistic research is ontologically dependent on the institution hosting the procedures.

Unable to figure out how knowledge is produced by human perception of the world, as a subsequent processing of received information, artistic research has looked at this ontologically defined means as a satisfactory barometer for the acceptance and exclusion of artistic work as integrated knowledge. Refusing any sort of essentialism in these definitions of knowledge, artistic research is lastly resulting from power-knowledge relations and its history has to be traced from genealogical studies.

Accordingly, in my investigation, art world follows the same paths: what happens in biennials is defining the concept of art and is determining its latest trends and identity traces. Besides biennials, also in similar events, and in other powerful media and art institutions such as journals, online platforms, certain galleries, certain individual authority's testimonials, certain public lectures, in a structure to which the knowledge economy recognizes authority to define fields of artistic practice and artistic research.

The idea that I am trying to articulate here is that the production of knowledge in the art world is eminently connected to the verification of research procedures. There is thus a combination of institutional hosting and institutional research procedures which ultimately results in knowledge production. Every artistic research outcome is therefore directed at this production of knowledge, and accordingly art has recently sketched the terms of a relationship between artistic production and knowledge production, as well– accounting to Sarat Maharaj declarations, at least since 2001¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁸ This is another narrative. Although artistic research is certainly compelled to the production of knowledge in artistic practice, the production of knowledge in artistic practice is not necessarily meaning artistic research. In this sense it belongs to another

With a common goal, artistic research lends a lens to art practice through which the art work is regarded as the medium for knowledge production: "... the art work becomes a medium of invention. One practical consequence of this is, that even though several practical parts tend to lengthen the studies, these stages are necessary in order to go through and display a certain process of change" (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p). The artwork is therefore simultaneously the enabler and sometimes the displayer of a certain change identified with knowledge: "It works like a mysterious translator that mediates between known levels of perception and discourse and unknown ones that it simultaneously establishes, institutes by its mediating function" (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p). But a vital part of the process – and reason why the art works alone are not fully displaying knowledge - is thus perceived as being prompted and channeled by research, being research outcomes the passages linking different states of awareness on a particular subject. Awareness and self-awareness, reflectivity and self-reflectivity, critique and self-critique are necessary procedures to accomplish artistic research and to originate knowledge from it.

Given that the production of knowledge is not the main function of artistic practice – although it is of artistic research –, one cannot determine nor find ontological conditions in the art world to measure the presence of valid knowledge being produced. The possibility is to find the intentions, or the enunciated intentions, of a more palpable concern with these matters, although they will more often than not happen in non-objective forms. The search process and the detection of signs of concern with knowledge and research practices within the art world is carried out by not trying to impose or identify ontological conditions for such, but rather by finding evidence of changed ways of seeing, of considering and of treating the aforementioned subjects in the previously adverse territory of contemporary art.

In face of these arguments, the presumed traces of the scope of artistic research in the art world of biennials and similar large-scale exhibition events are to be found in articulations of knowledge production, research procedures, and educational concerns, with which are related the problematization of spectatorship and documentation, for instance. The vocabulary includes terms such as self-reflexivity, criticality, and resistance. These mentioned topics are the hinge of the fields of art practice and artistic research and, therefore, my argument is that whenever these are approached by discursive and practices in the art field, an idea sketching artistic research is likely hovering around.

genealogy, hypothetically to another epistemology and archeology as well, in the case a deep committal is set for the pursuit of what is knowledge produced by artistic practice. The production of knowledge as an artistic aim is going backwards way more than 2001. One should look into Conceptualism and Abstract Expressionism, relate it to premises of Modernism. A long way would be tracked until Leonardo da Vinci and his painting as "cosa mental".

These concerns are most often perceivable through texts produced by the organizers behind high-ranking art exhibitions. The understanding of what 'research' and of what 'knowledge' are is not fixed and so may vary, but traces can be detected here and there. It is questionable to affirm that artistic research has entered their discourses in a clear way in the past, but surely it was already visible in certain details and is now traceable a certain propensity to the present state of things. Anyway, since a few years that the vocabulary of commissioners and curators has integrated terms more or less related to what has been perceived as the present-day phenomenon of artistic research, and so some intercalation has therefore been made possible.

Manifesta

The International Foundation Manifesta organizes public meetings to further discuss the themes Manifesta is about to address, giving the meetings the name Manifesta Coffee Break. Besides adopting a nomenclature that is a clearly reference to academic programmes, where coffee breaks separates the participations of speakers, these public meetings also seem to indicate the preparation of a bigger event, of what Okwui Enwezor intended for Documenta 11, where "something much larger than an art exhibition" was the goal. The latest Manifesta Coffee Break took place in St. Petersburg in 2014, and the report made available on the website accounts the question: "What can artistic research bring to urgent and political issues facing contemporary society, and can it have an impact in the larger sphere of policy making?"¹⁷⁹. If there were doubts, no more direct reference to artistic research in a contemporary art discursivity could be made. But this is the present-day, 2014. How was it in earlier days?

Since the first edition that Manifesta has adopted the plan of making the biennial something else than a vulgar international art exhibition: "Manifesta is not only an art show. The exhibition MANIFESTA I in Rotterdam in the summer of 1996, will be the climax to an intensive dialogue about new developments in the visual arts and will represent the first fruit of a new type of collaboration"¹⁸⁰. Prior to the opening of the exhibition, between 1994 and 1995, were held in ten different European cities the so-called "open" and "closed houses" meetings, organized by the five curators of Manifesta 1, where art professionals and the general public were invited to participate. The aims of the events broaden the sense of art, as proves the Manifesta Advisory Board statement: "Manifesta will encourage reflection on a wide range of

¹⁷⁹ Retrieved from <http://manifesta.org/network/manifesta-coffeebreak/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹⁸⁰ Retrieved from: <http://www.manifesta.org/manifesta1/statemnt.htm>. Last access on: on 30.06.2015

cultural, philosophical, political, historical and social issues relating to contemporary art in Europe”¹⁸¹.

The second edition is said that “For the first time, Manifesta included a series of international discussions and debates and launched a cumulative ‘Info lab’ (the basis of Manifesta’s present growing archive), with up-to-date printed and audiovisual material about current artistic tendencies in 30 different European countries”¹⁸². While the former “open” and “closed houses” were held prior to the main event, the integration of these discussions as happened in Manifesta 2 has been permanent since then. An engagement of Manifesta with educational issues was present in the house meetings of the first edition, and reminiscent in the international discussions of the second. Manifesta 2, however, was more focused in the relation between the subject and the object, exempting itself of very complex exegesis of the works. This focus on the object was accounted retrospectively by the words of Hedwig Fijen in *Notes for an Art School* (2006), where she said that “The urge to reinvent the biennial model as a purely artistic, production-based project was felt more clearly at the end of Manifesta 2 (Luxembourg, 1998) and in the run-up to Manifesta 3 (Ljubljana, 2000)” (n/p). Nevertheless, the self-awareness that since the beginning took part in Manifesta’s identity, making public its commitment in reinventing the format and in implying itself in transitional places in avoidance of control and neutralization by the international art scene, has been crucial for the recovery of the educational engagement and investigative tendency in the ensuing events.

Implicit in this restore of research in place of an all oriented “purely artistic, production-based project” is the recognition of the resistance possibilities of research procedures and its self-awareness aptitude, able to corroborate the intended reformulation at each edition. Of course that Manifesta is part of the art world circuit; what the director means is that this biennial has always looked for a marginal role in that circuit, keeping at bay marketing demands: “Manifesta has opted for closely integrating artistic practice in a more compact and more articulated community in order to de-territorialise itself from commercial constraints and so reclaim its humanity” (Manifesta 5, 2004, p. 16). Fijen anticipated that “[o]ver the next few years, this means a policy of inviting distinctly transitional areas to host Manifesta, and slowly withdrawing from the Western art circuits in order to create closer connections and collaboration with new communities” (Manifesta 5, 2004, p. 16). Unfortunately, in 2006 this pursuit for the transitional would lead to a disastrous result with the cancellation of Manifesta 6. The investigative tendency associated with Manifesta have slowly turned from embodied in preparatory studies – which were of course intended also as advertising and propaganda

¹⁸¹ Retrieved from: <http://www.manifesta.org/manifesta1/statemnt.htm>. Last access on: 30.06.2015

¹⁸² Retrieved from: <http://manifesta.org/manifesta-2/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

events – of the first editions to more entangled situations and designed integrations in the main exhibition. Research has stepped from a necessary preliminary state of the art into a decisive part for the ambitious aims of a marginal yet establisher large-scale art event. The third edition, held in Slovenia, offered what was called the theoretical part of Manifesta 3, because “Manifesta 3 exhibition requires a strong theoretical context. Such context will be offered by a programme of panel discussions, conferences and other events which will continue with the impulse of the Borderline Syndrome – Energies of Defence statement. The programme, however, will not only continue the ongoing discussion; it will also offer a possibility for a broader and more precise understanding of the exhibition as a whole, as well as of individual works”¹⁸³. Despite the explanatory emphasis given, these discussions were already happening in parallel to the exhibition, and not anymore functioning only as preparatory research for the organizing committee.

The recognition of the importance of critical studies in the contextualization of issues and articulation with the exhibited materials was definitely established among Manifesta’s organizing personnel, and was made present in visible adaptations of the programme (of which the inclusion of parallel discussions is an example) by the turn to the twentieth-first century.

“Manifesta 4 took place in more than 15 venues and urban sites in the city of Frankfurt/Main and more than a dozen theoreticians played a major role in site-related workshops, discussions and programmes”¹⁸⁴. The forum at Frankensteiner Hof was a remarkable project in the pursuit of debate between the proposals of artists, the local communities and the visitors. The “presentations of discursive and performance practices” took place “alongside round tables, on- and off-line projects, screenings, lectures and even short-term displays, as well as through different types, media and forms in which contemporary art appears today”¹⁸⁵.

For the fifth edition, held in San Sebastián in 2004, “The curators formulated a conceptual framework for Manifesta 5 on the basis of a careful investigation of Donostia-San Sebastian and its surroundings. This led them to their decision to interpret the area as a zone of contingency that lends to more complex interpretations of Europe”¹⁸⁶. If until this edition artworks and theoretical endeavors occurred in parallel (the Slovenian edition even offered the “theoretical part” to complete the exhibition component), the fifth edition of the biennial slightly changes this apartness, at least in the discursive level. In the project description appears at last the word “investigation”, although still referring to something at the curators’

¹⁸³ Retrieved from: <http://www.manifesta.org/manifesta3/theory.htm>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹⁸⁴ Retrieved from: <http://manifesta.org/manifesta-4/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹⁸⁵ Retrieved from: <http://www.manifesta.org/manifesta4/en/forum/index.html>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹⁸⁶ Retrieved from: <http://www.manifesta.es/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

responsibility, and giving the idea that the investigation is about a task to be finished prior to Manifesta. Again Hedwig Fijen, the already quoted director of the International Foundation Manifesta, wrote in the 2004 catalogue that “During the period leading up to the exhibitions, Manifesta’s entire programme focuses specifically on the exchange of knowledge, providing a structure in areas of Europe where there appears to be mutual interest in collaboration and in exploring new connections” (Manifesta 5, 2004, p.15). Add “exchange of knowledge” to “investigation” and something starts to get a shape. Concerns with presentation were at sight, too: “Since its debut in Rotterdam in 1996, Manifesta’s concentration on research and new presentational modes has been closely tied to the topic of East-West relationships, culminating with the holding of Manifesta 3 in Ljubljana in 2000” (Manifesta 5, 2004, p.15). And behold, with “research” added to the previous two terms, the shape being formed becomes a lexicon. However, the backdrop realization that becomes the crucial issue of this survey of research references in Manifesta’s discursivity, is that these concerns both with presentation and with research were always secondary to the thematic line of the exhibition, and developed in dependence and in function to it. To a certain extent, they were also overshadowed by it. Academy also first is called upon in an explicit way in 2004: “One particularly innovative program within the Biennale was Manifesta 5’s long-lasting partnership with the post-graduate Berlage Institute Rotterdam in The Netherlands, functioning as a urban mediator at the biennale and as a collaboration between architects and artists, exploring how contemporary art practice is extending in the reality of architecture and urban planning”¹⁸⁷. This collaboration in which the curatorial team embarked was focused “not merely on the essence of its findings, but rather on the possible effects of its research”¹⁸⁸. Additionally, the catalogue of the San Sebastian Manifesta revealed an increasing preoccupation with the organization of an archive of information and knowledge gathering the productions of Manifesta. It reads: “One of the challenges the International Foundation Manifesta now faces is to find a way to convert our expanding information resources into a site-based platform for Manifesta’s Biennial programme, one that can serve both as a repository of knowledge and as a direct stimulus to the efforts of curators and other art professionals. In this way, the fully networked archive will not only help to make information

¹⁸⁷ Retrieved from: <http://manifesta.org/manifesta-5/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹⁸⁸ “With this in view – and in an attempt to overcome the prescriptive nature of many contemporary exhibitions – the curators of Manifesta 5 also took the step of founding of the Office of Alternative Urban Planning (TOOAUP) in September 2003, in conjunction with the Berlage Institute, in Rotterdam, post-graduate laboratory of architecture and urban research, directed by the architect Alejandro Zaera Polo. Together with a specially designated team of architects, led by Sebastian Khourian, the curatorial team embarked on a collaboration that focused, not merely on the essence of its findings, but rather on the possible effects of its research. This method of investigation proved to be one way of gaining critical detachment from the built environment itself, and from the anomalies inherent in the traditional dynamics governing the relationship between city, province, region and state”. Retrieved from <http://www.manifesta.es/> on 30.05.2015.

more widely available but will also engage the active participation of curators/mediators and audiences alike” (Manifesta 5, 2004, p.18).

Previously made present in the open and close house meetings of Manifesta 1, in the international discussions of Manifesta 2, in the theoretical part of Manifesta 3, in the Frankensteiner Hof of Manifesta 4, and in the openly reformulated mottos of exchanging knowledge and research experiences of Manifesta 5, as well as in its collaborative project involving Berlage Institute, the academic presence has finally been given the spotlight in the preparation for the subsequent Manifesta 6. The preparatory studies were given the title *Notes for an Art School*, a publication edited by Mai Abu ElDahab, Anton Vidokle and Florian Waldvogel. The project was far more interesting than merely an approach of scholastic aspects and of problematization of academy from the outside, as could mislead the title. The curators had in mind the establishment of an art school in Nicosia to embody Manifesta itself for that year’s happening. From the outset no other entanglement as accurate as this could be imagined for the combination of contemporary art and academic framework. For the importance it deserves, I will go into it in the following separate section.

Manifesta 6: a fruitful cancelation. Anton Vidokle and *unitednationsplaza*, *Nightschool* and *The Building*.

As mentioned before, Manifesta is keen on self-criticism and always changing its format and approaches from one edition to the other, in a dynamic and challenging attitude that pursues constant reinvention. The published catalogues and the words of the steadfast director, Hedwig Fijen, to be found for the propos of every edition of Manifesta, are quite insightful of these concerns. A fundamental identity trace of Manifesta, when compared to equally large scaled exhibitions, is its choice to shift away from dominant Western topics and settle in the farthest edges of Europe, sometimes going through palpable remoteness, in territories in-between and which embody the transitional, both physically and metaphorically. The interest in the borders, and in the study of possible relations with the center, derives from both a self-understanding that defined Manifesta as a nomadic exhibiting project (with headquarters in Amsterdam), also functioning as its unique trademark comparing to existing biennials, and also is due to the fact that Manifesta has raised after the demolition of the Berlin Wall in the aftermath of Cold War and, for that reason, it is openly concerned, to this day, with the territorial matters involved in politics, such as geographical limits, East/West relationship, inclusion/exclusion, conflicting areas and the idea of Europe. It is no coincidence that Cyprus has made its place in Manifesta’s way, accounting for the political turmoil fostered by a

divided territory of Greek and Turkish Cypriots along the United Nations buffered zone known as Green Line.

Manifesta 6 was thought to be a temporary art school in Nicosia, starting in 2006. Curators say that “Thinking about education as a point of departure seemed a natural step, given our own need to learn about the complexity of Cypriot life, as well as a way of addressing the role of art within society and commenting on the current status of cultural production” (ElDahab, Vidokle & Waldvogel, 2006a, n/p).

Education was thus being regarded as bridge between art and society. The approach undertaken by the curators revealed a notion of education far beyond the transference of knowledge from privileged detainers to *tabula rasa* containers. Their idea of art education was from the beginning impregnated with contemporary art concerns, and consequently had made them forcibly to venture on an expanded pedagogy intersecting a politically concerned contemporary art. By doing so they were, in a way, drafting meaningfully artistic research. Nevertheless, the educational dimension of Manifesta 6 was only to be fairly witnessed, apart from the published preparative research of curators, in a project called *unitednationsplaza*, born in the aftermath of the non-realization of Manifesta that year.

Referring to *unitednationsplaza*, in an interview published in Frieze magazine in November 2009, Anton Vidokle analyzed the extent to which the project was educational. According to him, “...it was closer to an older model, like Aristotle’s Lyceum in Athens, which involved a bunch of people meeting under a tree to listen to and discuss ideas. Similarly, groups of people would assemble at a rather ugly building in Berlin to listen to lectures, take part in discussions, attend performances. Like an art exhibition, anyone could come and engage as much or as little as they wanted to” (Lind, Roelstraete, & Vidokle, 2009, n/p). Manifesta 6 art school was therefore to be an informal and unconventional art school.

Looking back to what happened in between 2006 and 2009, from the cancellation of the biennial to the events that followed in Berlin, Mexico City, New York and in Berlin again, it is clear that the proposal of an art school by Manifesta’s committee was not to implement an art school for real, although everything about it had educational sprinkles, from the format, the title, the publication prior to the opening *Notes for an Art School* (2006), to the issues it raised. To the respect of this formalities, and more than considering the topics presented in the many seminars, lectures and screenings of *unitednationsplaza* – and which could have happened in Nicosia, was it not cancelled –, it is relevant to attain to the ways curators, directors and coordinators presented the project and the reactions generated by an audience comprised of artists, curators and theoreticians. Surely I am not underestimating the individual contributions, but the fact that such a project was ever proposed, and the reception it had, is

substantially interesting in this moment of the outlining of the artistic research phenomenon, than, presumably, the wealth of contemporary art topics addressed during the event(s).

The Cypriot situation nurtured interests and discussion topics attainable from politics, art and education, all at the same time. The approach of the curators of Manifesta has made this convergence very clear.

Alike in politics, a conflict in education can be formed and interpreted in the interpenetration of center and periphery, or equivalently, the interpenetration of a ruling ideology and alternative visions, or institution and institutional critique. Likewise, artistic research arrogates all the educational interpenetrations and also consists of permanent interpenetration of two other territories, art and knowledge society, whose movements and overlapping eventually generate content of artistic research. Born from this geographical dynamics, the territory of artistic research is not unequivocally understood, so that its ambiguity allows for oppositional interpretations that position it either as neoliberal derivation and knowledge economy consumerism, or, on the other hand, as an artistic contesting endeavor. Some would possibly argue that it could be a kind of fifth vague of institutional critique: “This is one reason why I like to think about UNP [*unitednationsplaza*] – as well as e-flux – as partaking in a new fifth wave of institutional critique; one in which building new ‘institutions’, often separate from existing infrastructure, is the decisive factor. It’s about self-determination and involves strategic separatism.”, affirmed Maria Lind (Lind, Roelstraete & Vidokle, 2009, n/p). Even though she is not explicitly talking about artistic research, her observation is nonetheless convenient to the tracing of artistic research. Neither Manifesta 6 or *unitednationsplaza* (or *Nightschool*, or *The Building*) are addressing the field of artistic research in an explicit way, or managing its emergence, delimitation and aims, that’s why I try to trace parallelisms and possible relations as I analyze the events. Hereby the interest in these events occurs in a second level, for while they are not anchored in artistic research, they still provide useful information pertinent through interpretation and contextualization of the reader. For the time being and given the field is under construction, a research researching artistic research has to identify and appeal to occurrences that only indirectly carry out artistic research.

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Manifesta looks for the instability and the constant conflict of power-knowledge relations, moving in interpenetrations of center and periphery, both thematically and geographically speaking. Remote and instable zones – or the transitional, as they prefer – have been the chosen hosts for the biennial year after year, despite a few exceptions, that to this day have happened in Rotterdam, Luxembourg, Ljubljana, Frankfurt, San Sebastian, Trentino, Murcia,

Limburg and St. Petersburg. In between the editions of San Sebastian and Trentino, Manifesta was supposed to have taken place in Nicosia. The sixth edition of the biennial was planned to happen in the capital of Cyprus in 2006, but a series of political disagreements led to a troubled climate and a diplomacy failure, and, eventually, to the rescission of the project when its preparation was already well in hand. In any event the curators have found ways to continue the critical perspectives being worked on at the core of Manifesta preparation. Prior to the cancellation, the curators - Mai Abu ElDahab, Anton Vidokle and Florian Waldvogel – have edited *Notes for an Art School*, where, together with other authors' contributions, the problematic intersections are staged. A deeper look into it exposes insightful aspects for the tuning of the notion of artistic research, as it is considered by the curators as "... an ongoing research project questioning the existing models for art education and exhibition making" (ElDahab, Vidokle & Waldvogel, 2006a, n/p).

As already said, Manifesta's commitment of staying in the borderlines, in the in-between spaces and transitory places has cost it a cancellation for the 2006 exhibition, when work was halfway. Nevertheless the cancellation had a very productive effect, accounting the derivations that burgeoned in the aftermath. Projects like *unitednationsplaza*, *Nightschool* and *The Building*¹⁸⁹, here chronologically announced, would not have seen the light of day if it wasn't for the failure to comply Manifesta 6. We can only guess but we will never know for sure how would have been this event, planned for the interval between 23 September and 17 December in Nicosia, Cyprus. To this end, in addition to the consultation of available interviews and of *Notes for an Art School*, the acquaintance with *unitednationsplaza* proved to be enlightening, insofar as it carried out the programme of the cancelled exhibition. *Nightschool*, the event that followed, was already a bit different and faced slightly different constraints, also due to practical differences between the two projects (place, kind of audience, etc), while *The Building* recovered the settings of *unitednationsplaza*, although with a far more chaotic programme.

The individuality of Anton Vidokle stands out as the common denominator of this series of events, as the figurehead uniting all the projects, and whose parallel work produced apart from Manifesta and its sequence also looms very relevant to artistic research. Anton Vidokle has a very inspirational work for the intents of contemporary art and research., bringing him into artistic research, not as a pioneer, like the Nordic and the British are considered, but as a

¹⁸⁹ These are all aftereffects of the abortion of Manifesta 6. They are differently curated and while the first and the last took place in Berlin, *Nightschool* has traveled to Mexico City and to New York. Although they are regarded documented in artistic literature, their significance is uttermost to the field of artistic research. In this case the lack of a strong bibliography of artistic research, beyond the speculating anthologies and the numberless conference proceedings has not yet given an artistic research ground to settle reflection on these events.

developer, the contemporary agent of utter relevance to the definition of the field – even though he doesn't explicitly address the topic¹⁹⁰.

On the 6th of June Mai Abu ElDahab, Anton Vidokle and Florian Waldvogel have made public an open letter after their contracts were terminated by the mayor of Nicosia, showing their appreciation for the support received from other curators, writers and artists, and explaining their version of events. The letter also allowed unveiling a bit of what was supposed to be the sixth edition: "Manifesta 6 was planned to take the form of a temporary art school, the Manifesta 6 School, comprised of three departments revolving around diverse cultural issues and debates, and each proposing a different structural model for art education. The proposed Manifesta 6 School is a postgraduate, trans-disciplinary program for approximately 90 participants from many parts of the world lasting about 12-weeks.... Inspired by such historical examples as Black Mountain College and the Bauhaus, the School would be a meeting ground for cultural producers in the region and beyond, and a platform for discussion and production" (ElDahab, Vidokle & Waldvogel, 2006b, n/p). The art school, articulating "high academic and artistic standards" (Toumazis, 2006, n/p), was thought to parallel the main exhibition, once again and once for all showing that the implementation of a parallel programme has definitely rooted as a part of the Manifesta punch lines, making Manifesta a much larger event than just the showcase of cutting edge European art from remote parts of the continent. Nowadays it has become an established fact that all these big international exhibitions include a parallel programme in the orbit of the main exhibition elaborated in the basis of educational or pedagogical views. It is not part of the event since ever – we've seen how it went beefed up in Manifesta after Manifesta -, so this is the first fact of a growing interest in these goals that opens doors to what can be perceived as a growing interest in research forms as well. Continuing the search for articulations and details which support artistic research, a reading of *Notes for an Art School*¹⁹¹ appears appropriate as it sheds further light on the yearned plans of the organizing committee, and, additionally, goes deeper into problematization through the authored contributions. It actually addresses topics in such thoroughness that sometimes deviate from the mere outline of the issue of artistic research to embroil in adjacent debates or to make art school a theme on its own right (e. g. the texts of Jan Verwoert, Babak Afrassiabi & Nasrin Tabatabai, and Florian Waldvogel) . My interest here is, however, to identify, cut and assemble the fragments pointing towards such a formation, and struggling to

¹⁹⁰ Already in a seminar of TAHTO group in 2014, one of the conclusions at the end of the first day was that the making of artistic research didn't require the students and artist researchers to talk about artistic research all the time. It is in this sense that Vidokle can still be regarded as a rich contributor to the field of artistic research.

¹⁹¹ *Notes for an Art School* (2006), published by Manifesta, can be accessed at: <http://manifesta.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/NotesForAnArtSchool.pdf>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

get on track, as the multiplicity of the addressed subjects makes slippage to adjacent debates very likely to happen.

The index of *Notes for an Art School* organizes the content in a first part where the project is individually presented by the three curators, then a second part about the idea of art school in theory, to which follows a finale comprising more practical perspectives, including an insightful conversation between Anton Vidokle and Boris Groys. The preamble is made up of the contributions of institutional personas, pitching in the site specific identity of the project and hinting links of art education and artistic practice, by means of the academic institution and socio-political circumstances of the present. Some of the sketched commentaries are very opportune to the theme of artistic research and, for that reason, I will turn my attention especially to this preamble. When appropriate I will not also get through the other contributions. Yet, as I've said before, the most important thing here is that Manifesta 6 was thought as an art school, and not necessarily the ways in which the art school was thought. I will also resort to aspects related to the derived projects of the unaccomplished Manifesta, which are *unitednationsplaza*¹⁹², *Nightschool*¹⁹³ and *The Building*, and, presumably other projects that the people involved in these have carried out with similar premises.

Notes for an Art School portrays a more mature Manifesta. This takes the chance of this publication for undergoing an even deeper self-analysis by sharing some discerning commentary on past events. The highlight of self-analysis in this moment is accentuated by the thematic of the sixth edition. Educational as a focus spotlights criticality, and no criticality is possibly successful without self-criticism. I think this is, perhaps, the most discrete yet most important claim to coffer from this event. Hedwig Fijen's text, executive director of International Foundation Manifesta, is an attest of this maturity, unfolded through the testimony of the chronological evidence of Manifesta's engagement with educational issues¹⁹⁴. Her analysis reinforces her acknowledgment of success since "... Manifesta proclaimed itself to be not only a biennial exhibition, but an expanding network and an ongoing, knowledge-based workshop involving artistic communities from all over the continent" (Fijen, 2006, n/p).

Notes for an Art School is also worth reading especially for the clueful perspective on the intersection of this observable educational turn with artistic practice. Many sources state that

¹⁹² *unitednationsplaza* is an independent project by Anton Vidokle in response to the cancellation of Manifesta 6, and made in collaboration with Boris Groys, Jalal Toufic, Liam Gillick, Martha Rosler, Natascha Sadr Haghghian, Nikolaus Hirsch, Tirdad Zolghadr and Walid Raad, hosted in Berlin and terminated mid-November 2007. More info on <http://www.unitednationsplaza.org/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

¹⁹³ *Nightschool* was the continuation of *unitednationsplaza* in a new location in New York's New Museum of Contemporary Art, in a project called Museum Hub. The institutional circumstances required changes in the former project. It was a yearlong programme of monthly seminars lasting from January 2008 to January 2009 in collaboration with Walid Raad & Jalal Toufic, Paul Chan, Maria Lind and Owkui Enwezor, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Zhang Wei and Hu Fang, Natascha Sadr Haghghian and Raqs Media Collective. More info: <http://museumashub.org/node/48>. Last access on: 30.06.2015.

¹⁹⁴ On *Notes for an Art School* Hedwig Fijen goes through a report on the activities of Manifesta that make visible the growing concern of the event with educational aims.

Anton Vidokle “initiated research into education as a site for artistic practice as co-curator of Manifesta 6” (many online biographies actually quote this very sentence). The fact that Manifesta, in 2006, has opted for such an unmistakable behalf on art education allows for the noticing of an emergent educational turn in art, not only embodied by the succession of Manifesta edition, but also by other projects I will account on later. The notion of an educational turn would be further developed by Mick Wilson and Paul O’Neill in 2010, as well as by Irit Rogoff (2008).

Manifesta 6 School has been the culmination of a process being developed since the first edition – and although it has not come true, it was virtually a turning point. The first symptom of Manifesta’s concern with educational aims, says Fijen, “was the series of more than ten Open and Closed Houses organized by the five curators of Manifesta 1...”. The team of the third edition “... adopted a proactive, thematic approach, which led them to issue an open call to a wide range of art professionals and writers from different backgrounds to send in their reactions to the chosen theme...”, and additionally they “... invited contributors to open up a dialogue about how individuals might effect change, and the extent to which they might be willing to attempt this”, given the starting point: “Don’t ask what Europe can do for you, ask what you can do for Europe”. The self-awareness and criticality of Manifesta were met in the resulting texts, as they “... formed an integral part of the catalogue of Manifesta 3 and stimulated a critical debate about the passive nature of the Manifesta project as it had developed to that date”. The maturity felt on the sixth edition was being paved already from here. Manifesta 4 featured the “... Gasthof, organized by the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste, which involved more than three hundred students and teachers from all over Europe. This demonstrated the shared responsibility of Manifesta and the local community to pool knowledge and integrate professionals and non-professionals alike in a wider process of critical reflection...”. The following edition asked the collaboration of a “... postgraduate architectural school in Rotterdam [the Berlage Institute] to play an integral role in planning and developing the activities. ... The institutional collaboration between Manifesta 5 and the Berlage Institute led to the creation of a model for creative mediation, stimulated by teachers and students... ” (Fijen, 2006, n/p).

As showed, Manifesta has been paving a way of increasing concern with educational matters, for which the contributions of parallel knowledge-based programmes and ancillary activities, such as Manifesta Archive, Manifesta Publications, Manifesta Journal, Manifesta Discussions and Manifesta Coffee Breaks, developed in the course of events, have been crucial in carrying out this propensity of an expanding network and ongoing knowledge-based, pedagogy-inclined and critique-oriented project involving artistic communities from all over Europe. Again

Hedwig Fijen sets the question: “With the transformation of Manifesta 6 into an art school, it is worth asking whether educational objectives might have been at the back of our minds all along, as one of the principal factors conditioning our desire for a free and open exchange of information” (Fijen, 2006, n/p). I surely can’t tell what was bubbling in the heads of Manifesta’s board for all these years, but I can assert without hesitation that a confluence of events have worked together for a current (or back in 2006) strong educational stream in the artistic aims of Manifesta. I have gone through them, by emphasizing symptomatic vocabulary options, as well as by describing the chronological reinforcement of educational interests in Manifesta associated events. By this time artistic research has become an undeniable presence in the articulations of Manifesta.

The projects resulting from the cancellation of Manifesta 6 reinforced something that was already in course. Research into education as a site for artistic practice was the background rhetoric of Manifesta 6 – or something that “... might have been at the back of our minds all along”, since first edition, as inquired the executive director – and the basic ground for the setting up of artistic research as a field of knowledge that, by this time, starts to definitely emerge. All the discourse analyzed, be it the past Manifesta literature, the published essays of the sixth edition, or the ulterior projects, encourages this logics and reinforces the acknowledgement of a definite rise.

The cancellation of the sixth Manifesta marked the beginning of a series of temporary schools organized by Anton Vidokle in the tradition of free universities. Especially the first project, *unitednationsplaza* (Nov. 2006 – Nov. 2007), set up in direct response to the cancellation of Manifesta 6, and so taken as the Manifesta that never happened, was totally independent and self-organized (they even had their own building, in the back of a supermarket in East Berlin, which later would host the related project *The Building*). *unitednationsplaza* was a one year project comprising seminars, performances and screenings that gathered many artists, writers and philosophers. Some of the involved persons were well known artists and thinkers like Boris Groys, Jalal Toufic, Liam Gillick and Martha Rosler, all assiduous contributors to the e-flux journal to be later established in 2008¹⁹⁵.

After closing its programme, *unitednationsplaza* moved to Mexico City, and then to New York, and, under the name *Nightschool* (Jan. 2008 – Jan. 2009), it integrated the project *Museum as Hub* that was held at the New Museum of Contemporary Art. *Nightschool* was again a temporary school commissioned by Vidokle, one that held eleven seminars, as well as screenings and workshops, at the course of twelve months. Less independent than

¹⁹⁵ It first existed, since 1999, as an e-mail announcement service.

unitednationsplaza, *Nightschool* had to adapt to the structure of the museum that hosted the project, and thus was subject to institutional tensions and requirements, like attending to opening and closing hours, admission regulations and other rules. To this respect Vidokle says in an interview preceding *Nightschool*, that “In New York we’re working with a large institution that has a lot of employees, guards, precise museum hours, and all sorts of institutional policies. In that sense, there’s not as much freedom. For example we can’t go on with discussions until one o’clock in the morning, because the guards have to go home” (excerpt of interview between Chris Bors and Anton Vidokle, published on Blouinartinfo, January 31, 2008). The headquarters of *unitednationsplaza*, although an ugly building, allowed for an extended programme: “... [In New York] the programme is more condensed. In Berlin some seminars went for two weeks. Here all the seminars will be four days long” (Bors, 2008). The difficulties highlighted by Vidokle, although specific of a museum, perchance recall most of the feared consequences pointed out by doctoral students in artistic research programmes. Indeed they don’t have to worry with working hours of museum’s employees, but a set of academic rules at doctoral level surely apply, and some might even induce a state where “... there’s not as much freedom” as outside of the academy. These fears may be nothing more than exactly just fears, and the confrontation with reality may thus show that this can be very different. For several times in the interviews I’ve conducted I’ve asked students about their ‘fear of institutionalization’, and the answers were surprisingly positive. My conclusion is that this fear is something latent, historical and undermining their subjectivity, although when rationally and empirically facing the situation, their mistrust in academy is slowed down. In any event, their enrollment in doctoral studies is a voluntary decision.

However, what seems to me to be a stronger reason for this new benefit of doubt given to the enrollment in institution is a real change in the potential of the academy, both for self-reflexivity and even for artistic practice.

Simo Kellokumpu, researcher of Tutke and PhD student, is well impressed with the conditions offered by the academy. He does not even has to worry about opening and closing hours, since his grant assures him access 24h/day and 7days/week to a private cabinet within Theatre Academy! Kellokumpu regards the academic space as a refuge where he can be safe from the pressures of the freelance the art world and its impositions of art-as-commodity, and delve into his own and genuine research interest. He says that: “...I was looking for the possibility to be in a structure which offers you the consistency and support, to put it simply, to go through troubling questions in your practice. I chose Helsinki because they emphasise here that first of all they are interested in your practice, not the theories or philosophies that you master, or what you will master, but first of all you have to be a practicing artist before you can apply

here or be a substantial applicant for this programme... ". And it is a luxury to have the possibility of spending around four or five years exclusively dedicating to a single topic, as he points out: "...Time is one of the biggest issues here in terms of not to have any pressure to make productions in order to support myself economically. So I was relieved from these kind of productional pressures in art-making when I entered this programme. I was lucky to have a personal grant before I entered this programme, so I have had a chance to focus on this research, which is about the practice of choreography, also besides my work which I've done outside academia..."¹⁹⁶.

Time alone is not what transforms an artistic practice into artistic research, or what makes artistic research a valuable endeavor, but still it is a strong advantage of this kind of programmes. It is Yota Ioannidou who says it ("... if you want to produce an art book, you know. I mean, you need some time. As much time to spend that you drive into... what you're gonna do there... Time is important. It's not necessary. It doesn't mean that brings you... I mean, time is relevant... You can produce a great art concept. But the time in terms of research is important and for decision... I think PhD students have, you know, four years and not one. It's very hard to do this fast, you know. But it's not the... the distinction, you know. It's not the most important point to distinguish the..."¹⁹⁷), and I too agree: it depends on what you do with your time, so the conversations established with supervisors and colleagues are also fundamental.

Going back to *Nightschool*, a similar articulation was made by Anton Vidokle in respect to the goals of his project: "Night School can offer a lot, but the public also has to make an effort to extract what is truly beneficial in it. To give an analogy: there is a lot of information in the world, but it won't become knowledge unless you think about it in a focused way, really engage, and give it your attention" (Bors, 2008).

The opinion of Liam Gillick, is that the institutional constraints were enough reasons for *Nightschool* to be less successful than *unitednationsplaza*. In the earlier project in Berlin were "produced discussions and disagreements with an open door policy" and which "occupied the open space that has emerged between traditional models of art education as a fully functional artistic persona" (Gillick, 2008). In the website of the New York's New Museum of Contemporary Art, a post from 2008 accounts that "All topics will be addressed from the perspective of ongoing research and production, and as such will constitute the core structure

¹⁹⁶ Excerpts from the interview I conducted with Simo Kellokumpu at TeaK, in Helsinki. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

¹⁹⁷ Excerpt from the interview I conducted with Yota Ioannidou in her studio in Amsterdam. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

of the school”¹⁹⁸. Both projects seem to point out an alternative model of art school. I will not go into it. In its place I am interested in the critique raised for the risks of institutionalization in both territories: in the academy, as artists enroll in its programmes, and simultaneously in art reporting to the effects of excessive conceptualization. I will attain to this topic next as if within a parentheses. I will resort to published materials on the occasion of Manifesta 6 and consequent derivations. Afterwards I will get back on the main track of the fruitful cancelation of Manifesta 6 narrative that for the moment is kept in standby.

Institutionalization

Jan Verwoert’s text *School’s Out!-? Arguments to challenge or defend the institutional boundaries of the academy* offers a continuous confrontation between the defenders and the objectors of the academic territory for the practice of art. He “... tackles the academy as a site of production from the viewpoint of both its defender and critic” (ElDahab, Vidokle & Waldvogel, 2006, n/p). I don’t think there’s any other way to get into the issue, a complex one, without risking the adoption of a certain inclination. For a neutral approach in the portrayal of artistic research, if ever possible, it looms fundamental to account divergent positions, as well as supportive ones, for a final conjecture. As in the case of the text of Verwoert, it is likely that a mix of the two perspectives shapes the final position of the reader.

Calling again on the subject of the institutionalization as a decreasing of freedom, as insinuated by Gillick’s comparison between *unitednationsplaza* and *Nightschool*, the exposition undertaken by Verwoert in *School’s Out!-?* is very apropos, once it adds important particularities to the present discussion. The author covers the two sides of the question by evoking the effects of academization on artistic practice from the perspective of its defenders and that of its objectors, exactly what seems to be the necessary strategy for an efficient lineation of artistic research – or any controversial subject.

Artistic research conflicting situation is entirely due to the effects and preconceived distrusts generated by the supposedly threat of institutionalization. Understanding artistic research as a field emerging from the overlap of the territories of artistic practice and of the academic realm brings along these tensions, which in turn are very lively in the corresponding communities – of artists and of scholars. Besides attending to supporters and opponents, an analysis of the institutionalization of artistic research has to account related contemporary subjectivities of the artist, of the scholar and, eventually, it has to speculate on the subjectivity of the artist researcher.

¹⁹⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.museumashub.org/neighborhood/new-museum/night-school> on 30.06.2015.

Institutionalization is largely perceived through its effects on subjects even more in the context of a society of control supported in immanent capital -, and in the case of artists, consternation derives from the inkling of losing some important identity traits that make them artists. Like a last stronghold of artists in contemporaneity, whose practices are so manifold that sometimes merge with everyday gestures and with the non-artistic, their subjectivity is felt endangered by institutions seeking to hybridize it, as in the case of art academy, where “[t]he basis for the open affiliation of different producers... is, in turn, not so much an identification with the role model of the academic but, on the contrary, a sense that, within the academy, clear identity profiles are suspended. In the expanded field the academy thus attracts, especially, those cultural producers who are marginalised within the field of art production because their professional identity (which may oscillate between that of an artist, writer, researcher, project maker, etc.), when measured in conventional categories, is as much in limbo as that of an art student of whom no one can say yet if he or she is a future artist or not” (Verwoert, 2006b, pp. 59-60). In general, artists are very fond of their *persona*, enough reason to fear the consequences of institutionalization if it’s the case it enfolds some form of suspension or, to their regards, mischaracterization of the artist’s identity. Janneke Wesseling has spoken of the process of realization her students go through as they notice that they have become scholars and that they will be artists but scholars as well, after accomplishing the programme. Their first and spontaneous reaction is to disavow that evidence, but the fact is that they are scholars, if only because they were given the highest degree in education. And Leiden inputs a responsibility on its graduates on that respect, assigning them the responsibility of pushing further the field from which they have received the highest degree of education. Janneke Wesseling tells that: “So it took me also six years before I could ask an artist in a programme simply: ‘Ok, this is what you want as an artist, but what do you want as an academic?’ And it always comes with a big shock because they say: ‘I’m not an academic.’ I say: ‘But you are. If you have a PhD degree, you are an academic. So what do you want as an academic?’ But again it took six years before I had the clear picture myself. But they are academics and this does not in any way harm the fact that they are artists. They are an artist and an academic”¹⁹⁹.

It is removed on the other side of the road that artists sight the scholar, with a subjectivity completely constructed within academy and who, just like artistic research, depends on the existence of that institution to be kept alive. These are generally regarded as institutional supporters, even though their love for the academy is neither more nor less than their need to

¹⁹⁹ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

have it. The scholar envisaged by the artist is the rational individual, the structured and methodical mind, very much idealized image of exact sciences.

Obviously the two preconceptions collide, and artistic research has the hard task of articulating both, first in a temporary programme of studies, but also afterwards, following Wesseling's remark. Generally speaking, the standing point is notoriously negative, defensive from the artists' part, and even those who have engaged in doctoral studies show certain disquiet, as it appears on Yota Ioannidou's words: "Sometimes I feel it the one way, sometimes on the other way... I have to have all this kind of deadlines that... I mean, you have deadlines anyway as an artist... But I get somebody to supervise the, you know... when you are reaching some points, you know that you're learning something. You feel quite happy, so you... You have mixed feelings. On the one hand the fear and on the other 'wow', you know. It's nice, a good buzz, you know. You stay in some parts with many interesting people and very nice colleagues also. Mixed, mixed"²⁰⁰.

Palpable and practical aspects are at stake: their resistance to writing is probably the most visible, but also the lack of cooperation with academic protocols (a strategy of resistance, since the art world is filled up with rituals, many of them openly institutional), the complaint about a fleeting freedom (where others view a "state of exception" (Madoff, 2006) contrasting to a very exacting art market), or the rebuking reporting fundamental differences between art practice and research practice (without accounting that contemporary art is supposedly open to change and experimentalism, and so a sprinkle of research-like procedures should not be fearful). Janneke Wesseling speaks of a certain fear of knowledge in the art world, and particularly in respect to the academic environment for artistst. In our interview she remarks that: "... some of the dilemmas that you point at, I think, are not so different from a student in the BA phase and it happens all the time that they are afraid of gaining knowledge, they are afraid of really acquainting themselves with artists that move in a similar field of interest as they do themselves, because they feel that it will be a threat to their creativity and to the uniqueness or authenticity of their work. The knowledge that they gain will take away all spontaneity and creativity and will take away their big desire to make their own things. I think this is a huge mistake. It's really a mistake in thinking. If your creativity dries up because you gained knowledge, then it wasn't really very interesting to start out with". And so, Wesseling adds that: "I think this is so strong that sometimes people think if there is an artist who is very eloquent then he can't possibly be a real artist... This is one of the prejudices if you ask my

²⁰⁰ Excerpts from the interview I conducted with Yota Ioannidou in her studio in Amsterdam. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

personal motivation. If I can contribute in revealing this as false then I'm happy"²⁰¹.

With these generalized perceptions in mind I have asked my interviewees how they were, as artists, dealing with the academic groundwork where their training was being staged.

Interestingly, this negativity isn't passing in their testimonies. In fact, they overall seemed very cooperating, or laidback – as in the answer of Ato Malinda: "... I would assume so but I also don't worry about that so much (laughs)! I think just because in general I'm quite a laidback person and I wouldn't necessarily say that I'm an activist. I would say that an activist would be someone who maybe takes issue with institutional rules and stuff like this. But it does affect my practice, both for the good and for the bad... I guess it puts you deadlines, but deadlines are in the artistic world outside of academia anyways, so I guess in a sense, it works for me, and I don't know that I see a lot of bad things in. I'm still very new in this programme, but actually going back to school at a later stage and doing my MFA made me realise that I like the structure, and I think that actually has to do with initially having a scientific mind and needing something to say this is this and this is this and this is this and, yes, it's something that I actually benefit from... Yes, for the moment I'm comfortable with it. Yes, I am, and I'm not ashamed of it. I know a lot of artists are ashamed of saying something like that, but no, I'm not ashamed of it. In fact I'm very proud of the fact that I'm here (laughs)."²⁰² -, as well as aware of the potentiality academy can carry out as a challenging artistic practice, - as shown by Simo Kellokumpu testimony: "...I'm not afraid. I want this. I really want to be in this programme. But just thinking about it critically what happens in this process within this academic programme. It's important to be aware of the process, like what happens there in terms of making a thesis in a certain kind of educational programme, which is in relation to a certain kind of art world, in relation with a certain kind of western society. But I don't experience being part of this kind of institution in a negative way. It's been the opposite. These kinds of opportunities and possibilities exist for an artist, otherwise maybe I could have quit and changed the profession. This programme is somehow offering exactly what I was looking for as an artist."²⁰³.

Institutionalization has, *de facto*, a double effect, plucking praise and objection in arguments that sound contradictory most of the time. Leena Rouhiainen speaks of "tensions": "Will I lose my artistic practice? Yes, yes. There are tensions. Will I belong to the field anymore? There are tensions in the field that they still do not want to acknowledge. Some welcome, some don't. The field fears that the things are developed in a direction that the members in the field can't

²⁰¹ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

²⁰² Excerpts from the interview I conducted with Ato Malinda at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

²⁰³ Excerpt from the interview I conducted with Simo Kellokumpu at Teak, in Helsinki. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

handle or that we are taking funding from them that should be directly put to them... There are certainly tensions like this. Yes. And who am I after doing this? Where is my environment? And there is no clear answer. We are pioneers. We are building the environment; we are building the conversation and the tensions”²⁰⁴.

The interesting thing that must follow the identification of these tension knots is the feedback on both the sides. That academy sets a division between the inside and the outside is clear. That, as an institution, it plays the inclusion/exclusion operation is also easily realizable. The challenge is what to do with these realizations, because if in the one hand the dividing line is a virtual separation that aims at legitimizing art and research and so at maintaining the ruling institutional powers, on the other hand it is also regarded as the limit that still maintains a sort of buffer zone protecting art and artists from the market dictatorship. This buffer zone meets Jacques Derrida’s idea of ‘university without condition’; his university, “.... Is a privileged location of the forces of resistance and dissidence, which is why it is entitled to unequivocal freedom. Here everything can be stated in public, and the professors will assume the responsibility for this. The freedom to say everything that one believes is true and feels compelled to say creates an absolute academic space, which has to be symbolically protected by a kind of absolute immunity” (Waldvogel, 2006, p. 25). In a conversation with Anton Vidokle, Boris Groys notes that “... every education creates a domain of the excluded and forbidden that can be exploited by the students. To exclude or forbid something always means to open new possibilities and opportunities” (Vidokle & Groys, 2006, p. 66). The line that includes and simultaneously excludes is unavoidably either in academy, in education or any other institution. Once he or she enters the academy, the student is legitimized as a researcher, opening possibilities to direct works inwards or outwards to the excluded territories.

The potential contained in an artistic gesture towards an excluded territory, or towards the barrier that determines inclusion and exclusion, seems to be very present in Saara Hannula’s understanding of institutionalization. She says that “... I don’t think there’s a particular risk in that sense, in working in an institution especially if I am aware of the effect that it has on me, that I can also deconstruct it in different ways and choose to modify it in my own ways, for example, like being aware of how I do this research, what kind of relationship do I develop with the institution that I am working in. I don’t think I’m any more worried about it than I would be worried about anything else, like being subjected to something, or being

²⁰⁴ Excerpts from the interview I conducted with Leena Rouhiainen in her office at TeaK, in Helsinki. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

regulated...”²⁰⁵.

Moreover, “[c]an we really take it for granted that *education* is still the one and only purpose that the academy is to serve?” (Verwoert, 2006b, p.2). From this point on I think it is made clear that the opposition settled in between academy and art world in terms of institutionalization is but an obstinate whim held more for modern fantasies in autonomy than for actual effects in contemporaneity. Furthermore the academy has long expanded its role: “Ever since the conceptual turn in the art production of the late 1960s, the academy, apart from being a place of education, has been claimed more and more as a site of art production, presentation, circulation and collection”, says Jan Verwoert. “Similarly today, seminar settings provide a forum for the screening and discussion of video art and alternative films. As their works come to be collected in and circulated through university and academy libraries, the academic field has become a primary audience for at least some alternative film and video makers. In general, the definition of conceptually based art practices as interventions into critical discourse have brought the field of practice much closer to the academic field. When, as Brian O’Doherty has elaborated, the conceptual work is reduced to an ephemeral gesture, project or proposition that challenges and renegotiates conventional definitions of art, the primary mode of existence of such a dematerialised work may in fact be its discussion and documentation in a contemporary academic discourse” (Verwoert, 2006b, pp.2-3).

Beyond the registered openness to artistic events, the educational structure is likely to provide a reflexive discourse on art. From here, a strict connection between art, research and education is to be identified. Haris Pellapaisiotis, who contributed to *Notes for an Art School* accounting his experience in setting up Artalk seminars in Nicosia in 2003, corroborates this view by reporting that “In the absence of an art school in Cyprus, or of any other forum that might accommodate critical and constructive debate on art, I became involved in initiating and organising a series of annual seminars. Artalk began in 2003 and took the form of presentations by international artists, curators, historians, academics, philosophers and writers around themes and issues relating to the direction contemporary art is taking” (Pellapaisiotis, 2006, p. 80). This same bridging is present in the general coordinator’s, Yanis Toumazis, opening text, where he imputes the lack of a strong artistic profile in Cyprus to this inexistence of educational institutions, which also “... obstructs the development of wider research, critical debate and supportive theoretical background. The non-existence of a museum of modern or contemporary art renders this whole nexus incomplete, not to mention non-renewable” (2006, n/p). Unaware whether related or unrelated, the European University of Cyprus has set up in

²⁰⁵ Excerpts from the interview I conducted with Saara Hannula at TeaK, in Helsinki. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

2007 a School of Arts and Education Sciences. By that time the University of Nicosia installed the Fine Arts undergraduate course in the department of Design and Multimedia. Both are private schools, and University of Cyprus is not currently offering art education except for Architecture (integrated in the School of Engineering).

The educational structure being perceived as a hub for “research, critical debate and supportive theoretical background” sets the ground for a possible understanding of artistic research and, eventually to the awe of more purist artists, is regarded by these Manifesta’s organizers as a fundamental structure for the construction of a strong artistic identity.

Artists engaging in research seem to be more aware that institutionalization leaves space for resistance, as we can see from the words of Saara Hannula: “I think all of the structures we are engaged in, or working on them, they change us, they change our way of being, relating to things, and they construct our way of being in relation to the world, and what we regard as important”. What to do in face of institutionalizations is up to each of us: “I feel the field is wide open for me, and I don’t feel it as a limiting thing, and I feel that the institution is there to give me a structure that I can work against also, and that I can articulate my point of view against, and then I can understand what I actually think about things”²⁰⁶.

In the same line that scholars need academy, and artists need the art world spaces, artistic research needs the virtual line of separation, as an ontological guarantee of its very existence, whereas it also provides the necessary space for resistance that makes the line virtual, but not unswerving. Although occurring within an institution, it is necessary that research acquires a certain sense of autonomy, achievable by the stimulation of these self-awareness and self-criticality. Considering that “... artistic research does not only take place in institutions but it... also research institutions, take them as its object” (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p), Esa Kirkkopelto concludes that “[t]his also helps us to defend the independent status of the research done in art universities. Whereas neo-liberal market economy destroys institutions, or rather, maintains them only in order to exploit them, we should defend institutions by deconstructing them” (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p). Additionally Kirkkopelto stresses the potentiality at stake by saying that “Artistic research consists of a critique of its concrete conditions and its modes of effectuation that are, neither at the outset nor in the end, truly its own; that are defined by institutions at the outset and that in the end flee our reach altogether” (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p). Critical analysis are all the way encouraged in a research environment, even within an academic context, and even directed at that academic context. The thing is that the very structures of power are not really endangered by a disruptive action or any coup of artist

²⁰⁶ Excerpts from the interview I conducted with Saara Hannula at TeaK, in Helsinki. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”

researchers. Contestation is but the ground of a diplomatic negotiation staging the dynamics of power between institution and institutional critique, something that prevents it from stagnating and pulls into permanent renewal, but never the case of a violent iconoclast attack. The conversation between Vidokle and Groys, supplies another input in the duality of all these tensions, and the inescapable feeling that things will not get very different, institutionally speaking, is well present in the following: "... the power of 'critical theory' depends substantially on faith in the power of capitalism itself. You have to believe that capitalism is indestructible, that the work of art is always a commodity, etc., to be able to be permanently critical in the Marxist way. Critical theory believes in its own truth because it believes in the historical stability of the object of its critical analysis" (Vidokle & Groys, 2006, pp. 69-70). As long as artistic research believes in the power of institutionalization – and it does, for the benefits and also for the fears it nourishes – its combat of institutionalization will always develop at the individual level, and so rely on singular and authored contributions. Artistic research, as a disciplinary field, cannot be in charge of destroying institution, in the same way that any gallery or museum is asked to boycott the art market. So, since the institutional influence is unavoidable for artist researchers, their research strategies should be traced in the basis of their individuality, and not led by collective, disciplinary – institutional! – intentions. Only through the exercise of a certain autonomous individuality artistic research can escape the power of standardization and neutralization inscribed in institutionalized terms such as 'collaboration' and 'networking'.

As we try to get distance from institutionally arranged strategies and collective demarches, fashion terms like 'collaboration' and 'network' inform a strange and off-balanced relationship when associated with artistic research. Currently they are kind of ubiquitous, and contemporary art have largely fetishized them. They are used, and they are abused, at the risk they have turned into goals instead of means, in the worst cases. Reporting to the dangers of the dilution of the differences of academy and art world, it matters mention that importing these terms inwards art school have not been beneficial in pursuit of a transformative practice for research. While contemporary art can act on the basis of collaboration, and many interesting projects actually do, artistic research is individually achieved. Subjected to institutional conditions, artist researchers have to answer individually to assessment, and have to document their knowledge productions through authorship. Inasmuch as research may be a collaborative process, optimized by networked relations, in the end it will be always an individual production: doctorates are awarded to individuals, grants are awarded by individuals, and assessment is targeted at individual accomplishments or to a sum of individual accomplishments. At the present moment doctoral theses are still delivered and publicly

defended by one researcher, even though he or she possibly writes as “us” and calls on shared tasks and communal achievements. The integration, sometimes uncritically, of “collaboration”, “networking” and “interdisciplinarity” into research procedures and ways of being is only staging “... readymade knowledge of the latest aesthetics and terminologies of critical discourse, but nothing to contribute that would make a substantial difference within the field—since to make a difference is something you only learn when you take the time to grasp and confront the traditions and conventions of art practice and discourse” (Verwoert, 2006b, p. 57). Ready-made knowledge is thus staged, whereas it could be constructed from scratch and put to work in the in-between spaces that only a full comprehension of institutional conditions allow for. To this respect, I will quote again Jan Verwoert where he says that: “... academies should first and foremost teach an awareness of the difference between the academy and the market, and of the potentials that this implies. And it is precisely this difference that especially the outwardly more progressive institutions fail to recognise as they invite active professionals from the field of contemporary art to familiarise students with its current status quo” (Verwoert, 2006b, pp. 57-58).

Also some would argue that this delimitation of a safe zone would have the negative impact of providing a hideaway either for unsuccessful artists, whose skills would better fit the grammars of academic procedures, and for ageing professors who stagnate peacefully and without disturbance ignoring the trends of contemporary art, and even less worrying to inform their students about those. Florian Waldvogel, in *Notes for an Art School*, suggests that “The crisis of the European art academies is also a crisis of the authority of those who should be imbuing these institutions with new questions, content and substance. Professors view their work as an onerous duty, and few of them spend more than three or four days a month at their place of work. Politically minded teaching staff now remain increasingly outside of the academies and not even attempt to pursue an academic career; if they do, they are quickly disillusioned” (Waldvogel, 2006, pp. 21-22).

Again this cannot be taken too strictly. And again, surely some of these cases exist, as a possibility. There will always be exceptions and opportunities for resistance, even in the most opaque and oppressive scenarios of power relations at stake. However, surely exists also the other way round cases. And can we take for granted that we want our teachers in the academy to be the most cutting edge artists of the market? Would that guaranteed provide the creative conditions for the learning students? I’ve argued that it does not. Yet we surely do not want to hold true to pessimistic Gerhard Richter, who said in 1983 that “The most gruesome aspect of our artistic misery is to be found in the so-called art academies, which dupe the entire public with their pompous and resounding names. The word academy merely serves to deceive

ministries, local governments and parents, and in the name of the academy young students are deformed and misshaped” (cit. in Waldvogel, 2006, p. 21). On the contrary, speaking of her students at the PhDArts programme, Janneke Wesseling remarks that: “And personally I think that, unless you are extremely cynical, but I think that artists who are able to clarify their own dilemmas and questions will be able to take a next step in their practice and these answers will open up new areas and they will be much more articulate about what it is they are doing and what they want to be doing. So I would imagine that the products of this art practice or the art practice itself improves. But I think you can only see that on each individual level”²⁰⁷.

For the calamitous earnest Verwoert’s slashing commentary adds to the complexion of institutionalization, it decisively puts in crisis the very idea of crisis in the art school. There is no possible crisis in a concept that is always changing in as much as art is changing itself: “George Bataille defined art as an act that is controversial by nature and in opposition to the status quo. What would education for this kind of concept of art look like?” (Waldvogel, 2006, p. 25). This is much more the question, rather than trying to set up the next successful but not so successful model for art education.

Alike thinking about artistic research, thinking about the new art school is about the cross-country, without an end in sight. And alike conceptual art, it is about the process of thinking the object of art; even though there isn’t an object, there is the reflection. Arthur Danto has earlier highlighted the importance of philosophy to understand art in the aftermath of Pop Art and Conceptualism, stating that it could no longer be taught by example. Consequently, the model of education is shattered in its most traditional configuration of master-pupil. Yet, far from setting up a slump, this breaking allows for transformation in the structures of education, in its parameters and in its objectives. At hand is a crisis in its most productive assumption.

The atmosphere set is therefore not one of rigidity, and so new forms of dealing with education as a productive site of artistic practice are rehearsed. The circumstances of dematerialization of the object of art, the inclusion of everyday into art in the form of events, and the call on philosophy, all seem to set up the conditions for the burgeoning of research, in the academic vocabulary, in minded practices, in project description, in institutional conditions. The circumstances are real and not only sensed, but actually palpable.

From the emergence of artistic research as *institutionalization* to the *institutionalizing* and *instituting* effects of artistic research is only a short distance. Artistic research as an *institutionalizing* or *instituting* practice unfolds as the conversation about institutionalization develops. It contains this double relation to institutionalization: for the one side it derives from

²⁰⁷ Excerpt of the interview that I have conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

that specific legitimizing setting, and on the other it also settles things up. But it settles things up in two different ways, either institutionalizing or instituting. At a certain point of our interview, Saara Hannula seemed to be pointing this aspect out, when she invoked Esa Kirkkopelto²⁰⁸ into our conversation: “I’ve noticed a situation, for example, when institution suddenly takes shape. If we have conversations about experiences that we’ve had, like artistic experiments or something, and there’s sort of like I have my own way of articulating the experience or I have my own interests, and there’s, suddenly, there’s this sort of, for example through what Esa [Kirkkopelto] is saying, or how he’s like articulating the experience or framing it. There the institution takes shape...”²⁰⁹. Although she is a student of Aalto University, Saara Hannula is an assiduous frequenter of the Praktikum sessions of the doctoral programme of Theatre Academy in Helsinki, oriented by Esa Kirkkopelto²¹⁰. According to Kirkkopelto, “[a]n artistic outcome no longer manifests itself in its sheer originality, as pure invention, rather it also shows and establishes its routes to discovery. In other words, the artwork becomes a medium of invention. ... Artistic research makes up inventions which, insofar as they are of public utility, are also (at least potentially) new institutions, and thus carry out critical changes in the institutional status quo” (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p). Artistic research has a delicate yet challenging battle to be faced carefully against institutionalization. The distrust of academic conjecture is one popular and partly manipulated argument thrown by skeptics and generally inscribed in artists, whose uncritical adoption may simply stagnate artistic research. Most of this type of arguments are directly absorbed from contemporary art world, neglecting that there is a difference – a healthy and important division line – between academy and art world that should be preserved for mutual benefit. It is only in the presence of such line that disruptiveness can be rehearsed in both sides and that the articulation can be proposed – not as an institutional endeavor, but always through individual attempts, in order to avoid feeding the big gear whose chances to defeat are actually null. The artist researcher can aspire to “... carry out critical changes in the institutional status quo”, also in the terms proposed by George Bataille, but in a down-to-earth hitting slim to yearn its destruction. For as much as this argument is Marxism inspired, and anchored in Western philosophy, it’s also in Western grounds that artistic research has been more effectively developed in clusters in Northern and Continental Europe, as well as in the USA and

²⁰⁸ Saara Hannula is a doctoral student in Aalto University in Helsinki. Yet she attends the Praktikum sessions led by Esa Kirkkopelto at the Theatre Academy for the students of the doctoral programme hosted there. I myself have attended one of those sessions in February 2015, presented by Simo Kellokumpu.

²⁰⁹ Excerpts from the interview I conducted with Saara Hannula at TeaK, in Helsinki. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”

²¹⁰ Praktikum stands for “research in practice” seminars. In February 2015 I also attended one of those Praktikum classes, where Simo Kellokumpu was the student guiding the group through a series of performance tasks important for his choreographic research.

Australia. No model can aspire to be out of the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy. No success is expected in trying to determine the best procedures for artistic research. The journey is primarily about going through the tension knots in its relation to institution, and the resulting procedures are absolutely at the responsibility of each and every artist researcher individually.

Back to the narrative of the fruitful cancellation and ready for the final notes: Anton Vidokle and the practice of artistic research

The Building was sort of finishing the trilogy of projects on the theme of education as a site of art practice. At least the core trilogy, leaving aside the second short establishment of *unitednationsplaza* in Mexico City, where basically the same premises and circumstances were followed, and other less eventful occurrences, for instance the itinerant exhibition of Anton Vidokle, *Exhibition as School* (2009)²¹¹. *The Building* did not have the direct participation of Vidokle, although he is doubtlessly related for the association with *unitednationsplaza* and the sharing of the same headquarters in East Berlin. Ending a circle, *The Building* resulted from the collaboration between Jan Verwoert, Mediengruppe Bitnik, Aykan Safoğlu, Florian Göttke, Sepake Angiama, Elena Filipovic, Hans Ulrich Obrist and La Stampa, and lasted from October 2008 to June 2009²¹². It was divided in two proposals: the first was the series of talks and conversations mainly curated by Jan Verwoert and entitled “Why are conceptual artists painting again? Because they think it's a good idea”, and the second was the announced closing event taking the form of “... a special two-day program of presentations, screenings, shows, parties, lectures, performances, drawing classes and much more; all starting this Tuesday, August 25th at 4PM and finally ending Wednesday, August 26th whenever the last person leaves the building”²¹³. It culminated with a gig by La Stampa, the pumping punk-rock band of Jan Verwoert.

Central to all these developments is the person of Anton Vidokle. The fact that the territory of artistic research is still lacking a solid community of peers, and that it in the meanwhile is comprised of a mixture of artists, students, scholars, philosophers and curators, some supporting the cause, some others testing it all the time, makes it natural that the inexistent community is progressively becoming existent, in this initial stage, as individuality after individuality, as well as their projects, are spotted in the landscape. It is in this trail that

²¹¹ This exhibition was held in places such as Art Contempo (Portugal) and Knoxville Museum of Art (USA). It was a kind of sum of the recent work of the artist, who usually exhibits works as familiar social forms like artists' conversations, lectures, video archives, or temporary schools. Vidokle's work plays an important role in questioning the production of discourse in knowledge in art, and how these are being documented, conveyed and distributed in the artistic circuit. He often collaborates with a number of other artists, writers and philosophers, among who are Julieta Aranda, Boris Groys, Liam Gillick, Martha Rosler, Walid Raad, Nikolaus Hirsch, Brian Kuan Wood, Natascha Sadr Haghghian, Hila Peleg, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Jan Verwoert.

²¹² More info on: <http://www.unitednationsplaza.org/location/the%20building/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

²¹³ Retrieved from <http://www.unitednationsplaza.org/event/44/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

individualities have been insistently evoked and quoted in this text, appearing as central figures of the meta-narrative of artistic research, among which are Jan Verwoert, Annette Arlander, Jeremy Diggel, Mick Wilson, Henk Slager, Jan Kaila, Esa Kirkkopelto and Anton Vidokle. From the aforementioned set of individualities, only two are not practicing artists (Jan Verwoert and Henk Slager), and the fact that all have one foot within the art world and other outside is, perhaps, what make them so stimulating. It is interesting, though, that the in-progress state of artistic research is a magnet for such a variety of voices, with quite different backgrounds and practices, accounting all of them in the attempt of formulating a clearer view of itself. This is called self-awareness.

Anton Vidokle has been undertaking quite influential initiatives in the discourse of contemporary art, and it is the notoriety of the projects he has been involved in that awards him such renown. By analyzing contemporary art's discourse and development, Vidokle is also transforming it. The operations that Vidokle and his projects stage, as well as the subjects approached very often as intersecting points or/and transversal issues, call on a variety of perspectives and an heterogeneity of fields, giving rise, eventually, to new territories. Following this, artistic research has been object of his research since at least 2005, even though not explicitly by that name. It was in 2005 when Vidokle initiated his intensive work of preparation of Manifesta 6, whose topic was about the envisagement of education as place for the practice of art.

Despite an impressive activity on an extension of projects of curatorship, organization of seminars and lectures, workshops and specialized publications, Anton Vidokle identifies himself as an artist in the first place. He has been actively showing his artistic work in several respectable exhibiting halls all over the world, like Tate Modern, UCLA Hammer and Haus der Kunst Munich, and integrating important biennials like Venice, Lyon and Dakar, among others. He is "...one of many artists who recognize the educational potential of art, but his productions usually do not manifest themselves in the form of traditional art objects. In the place of sculpture or painting, Vidokle creates work in the shape of social forms familiar to us – such as libraries, schools, and public conversations"²¹⁴. One could easily regard Vidokle's work as theoretically biased. However, both from his point of view and considering the hybridization of cultural and artistic forms, from where artistic research emerges brightly, such label sounds rather limiting. In fact it goes against much of what contemporary art has endeavored to achieve, namely the blurring of the severe distinction of theory and practice. For that matter, it is also capricious that artists usually recognize their practice carries a certain amount of theory,

²¹⁴ Retrieved from <http://knoxart.org/exhibitions/vidokle/>. Last visited on: 30.06.2015.

whilst find it harder to accept that theory is also conveying practice, or that a theoretician may also be a practicing artist.

Interviewed by Chris Bors in January 2008, Vidokle says that: "My projects sound theoretical, but basically they are discussions with groups of different people. Theory is useful because some of it is able to articulate subtle things that can be very difficult to describe otherwise, but I wouldn't say it's a theoretical program. It's not only thinking about theory; it's about active engagement and actual practice. As for the marketplace, I simply don't care about it. It's out there, but I hardly ever think about it" (Bors, 2008). Faced with recent expansions in the subjectivities of both artists and curators, Vidokle's practice can also be associated with that of one of those "curators-artists" mentioned by Ricardo Basbaum to distinguish from a curator (or from a "curator-curator", as one who is full-time curating). A "curator-artist" is, according to Basbaum, an artist adventuring into curatorship, and, for the reason of being an artist, the "curator-artist" is acting differently from the full-time curator: "When artists curate, they cannot avoid mixing their artistic investigations with the proposed curatorial project: for me, this is the strength and singularity they bring to curating. The event [*The next Documenta should be curated by an artist* (2003)] can have a chance to become clearly embedded in a network of proximate knots, enhancing the circulation of 'sensorial' and 'affective' energy - a flow which the field of art has managed to comprehend in terms of its economy and circulation" (Basbaum, 2003). Curators have been criticized for trying to set up exhibitions that function only as illustrations of their previous concept or view, something they want to see reinforced with the help of works they select. As a result, they have been embracing the idea of proceeding with increasing creativity, what has sometimes earned them the epithet of "artist-curators".

Artists, on the other hand, have been feeling the necessity to assume control on everything relating to their work, eking to the conception and realization of the artwork also its contextualization, presentation, exhibition and distribution. This corresponds to the emergence of the artist-as-producer, to which artist-as-curator (or "curator-artist", using Basbaum's term) is a part. The artist-as-curator has evolved thus, at least partly, from the desire to control the reception of the artworks, since curators have passed from an uncritical approach to a more creative proposal that, for as much objective as they presume it is, will always reflect a subjective set of relations creatively established by the artist-curator's mind. In order to not let this largely escape original intents of the creator, artists have also agreed their intervention, since the artwork's Modernist autonomy is not enough to guarantee the imperturbability of the objects. Boris Groys has being poignant pointing the "unhealthy" state of artworks which he claims to be in need of a "curating" intervention, that is the setting up of

the relation with the public (Groys, 2007). Artists have been more and more involved in the curating of exhibitions, some of large renown like the Venice Biennale that in the year of 2003 counted with the participation of Gabriel Orozco and Rirkrit Tiravanija as co-curators, the Whitney Biennial that in 2014 counted with the co-curating of Michelle Grabner who remarked: "I had been visited by curators of the Whitney Biennial many times before and I had always hoped that I would be included as an artist—but I never saw the possibility that I would be chosen as curator" (Pollack, 2014) , and Christian Jankowski named as chief curator for the upcoming 2016 Manifesta 16 in Zurich.

Despite the visible approximations, Anton Vidokle is keen on differentiating his artistic practice from curatorial activity. Interviewed by Nkule Mabaso for *oncurating.org* on April 2014, Vidokle states that "I do see curators as people who work significantly differently than most artists. It's a much more extravert activity that has more to do with aggregation than with the kind of work with the self that is implicit in much of artistic practice, even when it looks superficial on the surface. There is also a lot more distance between curators and their production than between artists and what they make" (Vidokle as quoted in Mabaso, 2014, p. 20). Curatorship distances itself from artistic practice as it is regarded as an aggregator practice dealing with existing artworks put together in order to demonstrate or suggest something. It includes an extensive work of preparation, of sources consultation, of investigation, aiming at making clear a certain idea about a given topic. These terms approximate it to artistic research, whereas artistic practice is not concerned with public utility and even less with aggregation and demonstration of any preconceived idea.

If not an artistic practice, could then curating be regarded as an artistic research activity? The institutional requirement is fulfilled, since what is being curated is hosted in an institution, be it a museum, a gallery or an academy. The fact that there is a certain distance between subject and object, as pointed out by Vidokle – even though subjectivity cannot ever be dismissed –, sets the space needed for analysis and reflexivity, both fundamental for research and for curatorship. But research is about producing knowledge whereas curating is better read as an activity that is about setting the conditions for knowledge to be produced – a bit like a school, in the terms of a creative hub. Providing the conditions for production, instead of producing, exempts the curator of responsibilities for trying to be something impossible in curatorship: objective. Vidokle puts it like this: "... there is an interesting vacuum at the centre of curatorial work. This is because the reasons for inclusion of this or that work in an exhibition, are primarily subjective, while so much effort goes into trying to present or account for this as something objective, systematic, almost scientific, which most of the time it is not" (Vidokle as quoted in Mabaso, 2015, p. 20).

The increasingly creative new curatorial practices (“artist-curator”) and the artist who takes upon himself the control of every aspect of his art practice (artist-as-producer, which includes “curator-artist”) are both transformations to be analyzed through the lenses of i) an educational turn with economic and political roots, responsible for setting up a ‘crisis of the art academy’ which diverts attention to art school and impregnates surrounding practices – as curatorship and art-making – with a pedagogical temper; and ii) the artist’s and researcher’s concern with public engagement and spectatorship, a topic that is overtly related to the first.

i) There is an installed perception that the academy has lost the capacity to promote free reflection and speculation. Derrida’s ‘university without condition’ seems to be endangered by the latest happenings in political and economic levels, whose consequences have implacably stroke the academy. The occurrences are far from being only educational, though.

The vague of artistic projects and symposia dealing with the new art school and related matters are nonetheless evidence of the idea of a ‘crisis of the art academy’ (derived from a wider crisis of education). It is a topic that has been slowly inscribed into subjects, so that the pursuit of ‘a new art school’ has become a collective inquiry. The educational concerns evoked are but sophistications nurturing the neoliberal system, sometimes mixing up with notions of proactivity, cultural goods, creative industries and other terms of the new cultural economy. Why would then curators be so concerned with education? Why is the impairment of contemporary academy serving as reason for such a stir and mobilization under the name of education?

The background for new curatorship practices, for research practices and for the related subjectivity of artist as researcher, is the perceived educational turn in art accompanied by the transformation occurred within academy. I have somewhat gone through this educational turn while discussing institutionalization effects in both the sides of artists and of researchers, where practicalities were discussed. The fact that a debate on artists fearing academy and the role of artist researchers is taking place, is due to a specific appearance of a setting that can be called ‘educational turn’. It manifests itself in both curatorship and in art making, adding relevance in both to the development of research. It is usually identified as a consequence of late transformation occurred in academia, especially since Bologna Agreement has started making effect.

The pervert entanglement of Bologna and neoliberal economy is widely known, with corporations and big private enterprises entering the educational sphere through partaking board positions in universities. Another consequence of Bologna is the imposition of standardization, so that comparison between international systems is made possible in order

to prompt mobility between students and teachers. This standardization requires, of course, quantification, so that comparison, assessment and control take place. Led by the wave, even humanist and artistic areas have been targeted with these demands, experimenting on ways to present and disseminate their specific achievements through the quantifiable outputs demanded by university and entities of knowledge society at large. To an extent, "... art academies have lost track of their initial setting of tasks such as being able to offer a speculative space, a space accommodating a reflection being able to withstand any quantifiable results" (Slager, 2012, p. 11). This is, of course, discussable, and since it is true that new requirements have been brought upon by the hands of Bologna and knowledge economy, it is also true that most of this remonstrance and resistance, felt by artists more than by scholars, is supported more in preconceived ideas and modernist nostalgia, rather than in effective menaces. If it is true that the academy holds a legitimizing division line of inclusion and exclusion of knowledge and research – please note, not of art –, it is also true that there is plenty of excluded space for a free artistic practice. In terms of artist research, then there are circumstances that surely have to be met within an academy, but I suppose that it is all coming with being part of an institution.

Do art ever considers to leave the academy? Do artists teaching in doctoral programmes ever consider leave the academy? What does the academy give them so that they continue?

The biggest problem of funding affecting artists in academies is because their practices are regarded as inadequate to the homogenizing assessment criteria, which applies better to exact sciences, engineering, languages, sport, and even social sciences, among others, and so are considered irrelevant, or close to irrelevant, for funding entities' goals. As much as this is a revolting situation and worth of further reflection for possible ways out and negotiations, it is also true, in a first sight, that the most complaining artists are most of the times those promptly refusing all the research rhetoric. This funding, assigned to academies and research centres, is for research in and through the arts, not for art projects that refuse the commitments of public discussion. Moreover, there are alternative funding for art projects outside the academy, a funding to which artistic research cannot apply for since it carries other kind of commitments not matching for artistic standards. And yes, artistic standards exist, too, and art world also holds a legitimizing division line. Still, the important matter here is to ascertain whether the speculative space of a 'university without condition' (Derrida, 2001) is still taking place. This is the incidental challenge that artists in academies, artist researchers and art educators alike are at charge of unveiling as they develop work and keep in track with their specific practices.

ii) In the second place, yet derived from the educational turn, it is felt an emerging concern with "... the role of visual art is in a process of transformation with regard to the spectator and the public" (Slager, 2012, p. 11). A consequence of the first item, that is the appearance of the contemporary subjectivity of the artist-as-producer, is particularly relevant to the overt concern with public-ness (in terms of public engagement, emancipation and reception): "What becomes abundantly clear is that today artists should especially be able to present and contextualize their projects" (Slager, 2012, p. 7). This artist-as-producer is someone who felt the need to overtake the control of everything related to his or her artistic practice. It seems appropriate to this matter the example given by Anton Vidokle of Martha Rosler's work *If You Lived Here...* (1989), in respect of which and in the face of lack of support of the commissioning entity, made her "... felt that the only way to do something was by positioning herself as a curator/organizer – as a kind of one-person institution rather than as an individual artist" (Lind; Roelstraete & Vidokle, 2009). This new subjectivity is concerned with creating the conditions for the production and reception of the work of art.

It can be stated that contemporary art is intimately connected to its presentation. Or rather, to its production, since production includes the conception, realization, presentation, distribution. For the sake of its sale, or for assuring that the conditions of an optimized reception are guaranteed, or due to the belief that the audience is a disempowered audience. If contemporary art has reached this stage of pivotal concern with the reception of its works, is the result of a way designed by political and economic circumstances, but also a consequence of the developments towards dematerialization and the consequent focus on process, rather than object, that such dematerialization proposed. All these facts together have helped the design of the new situation. Asked about the main goal of *unitednationsplaza*, Vidokle answered it was about trying "... to generate a new kind of public, a public that is not just interested in coming to an exhibition opening to have a drink, chat with friends, and never come back, but that is closer to a real constituency—a group that would become real participants in a project, become engaged and have a stake in it" (Bors, 2008). Not only the artist-as-producer is concerned with engaging public into the process, that also the public-ness of research is one of the most vivid affairs it goes through in the present of its development. Public-ness, a word barely existent in English, comprehends the documentation, the presentation and the distribution of research, which are the way to fix the knowledge produced – for instance, what are the limits of the dissertation and how can I manipulate writing?, ways to discuss it with an audience – or how is the pomposity and the academic rituals of a public defense affecting my work?, and, finally, the best means of conveying the sum of everything – or how can I interfere in the reception of my research?

In the seminar *Conversations on Artistic Research*, which I organized in Porto in November 2014, among other things was discussed what seems to me a topical issue of the field, that rhetorically in the form of a question is ‘how can I document my research in a way that it differs from my artistic practice?’. At this respect comes to my mind – and was also mentioned in *Conversations* - the recently deceased Chris Burden and his performance *Shot*: the documentation of *Shot* has become *Shot*; *Shot* does not exist except in the documentation of a past event. A case among others, it serves to introduce the problem: if artistic research and artistic practice are not the same, then there must exist a way of documenting it differently, a way that is context responsive and that carries out knowledge – or information convertible in knowledge at the responsibility of the audience – such public engagement advocated by Vidokle with regard to *unitednationsplaza*.

Vidokle’s work has been apparently more relevant to the research-community art world agents than to art itself – or has been, at least, received with more enthusiasm by the former. He “...commands the attention of 70,000²¹⁵ people each day. Yet comparatively few members of this audience consider him an artist” (Sholis, 2009, p. 7). The formats he chooses, unconventional for the common public, yet too representative of scholarly contexts and ruling powers in the imaginary of non-academic artists, conditions its reception among peers. He considers e-flux to be the work that better fits the way he wants his work to be understood: “e-flux started as a kind of an art project, then over a span of 15 years it developed in a number of directions some of which are editorial, other curatorial, revenue generating, organizational, artistic, etc. It’s a very complex structure and I don’t pretend to fully understand what it actually is – this is also why it stays interesting for me. Furthermore, it continues developing and I can’t really envision any type of a final form or definition of what it will be in the future: we basically simply follow our evolving interests in many different activities. A scientist I know recently suggested that this sounds like a kind of an institute, maybe he is correct. Can institute be an artwork? Why not” (Mabaso, 2014, n/p). Or, the other way round, can’t an artwork be an institute? And can’t artistic research be instituting? At stake in Vidokle’s work, and in other authors developing work in the same paths and neighbouring areas of artistic research, is not the innovative character of their proposals, neither the unusual media, or even the contemplation to approximate in a new conjunction such historically conflicting domains as are art and academy. At stake is the inventive character of their proposals, which is crucially different. As the artist’s practice gets more reflexive, and yet

²¹⁵ Updated information: as current as April 2015, the users of e-flux go as follows, according to www.e-flux.com: “e-flux is read by 90,000+ visual arts professionals: 47% in Europe, 42% in North America, and 11% Other (South America, Australia, Japan, etc.) 18% writers/critics, 16% galleries, 16% curators, 15% museum affiliated, 12% artists, 10% consultants, 8% collectors, 5% general”. Last access on 30.06.2015.

more communicative, he or she changes into an artist-researcher. This process certainly endangers the fancy Modernist autonomy embodied in originality concerns, and also shifts from innovation to inventiveness – the first relates too much to a current creative economy to stave off and is too attached to over past originality – so that the research outcome is not manifested in its originality but attains its discovery and transformative potential as an invention – or rather, as “medium of invention”, as argued by Esa Kirkkopelto: “... a medium is simultaneously that which enables the change, the transition from one state to another, and that which displays it” (2011, n/p). Resorting to the performative potential of discourse, any critical discourse about art or its institutions aims at transformation, implying that invention becomes institution in an active sense: “Artistic research makes up inventions which, insofar as they are of public utility, are also (at least potentially) new institutions, and thus carry out critical changes in the institutional status quo” (Kirkkopelto, 2011). The public discussion necessary to any artistic research outcome reinforces that originality and any sort of aura are not to be considered assessment parameters, but instead is its potential for being appropriated. In a sense, authorship should not be an objective or a claim to artistic research; however, we will see then why must be kept a controlled sense of individuality at the same time, particularly to offset the fetishized idea of collaboration that can, in some cases, seriously undermine the artistic research.

Other reasons for Vidokle’s projects discretion among artists’ reputability are certainly their collaborative traits and conception as events, like happenings that escape the logics of authorship and materialism of art-as-commodity. On the topic of collaboration, Brian Sholis wrote on the preface of *Produce, Distribute, Discuss, Repeat* (2009), that “... the self-effacing nature of his endeavors” (p. 7) might be causing the enormous disparity between his discrete acknowledgement as artist and his yet ubiquitous recognition as a theoretician. According to him- e-flux has impregnated Vidokle’s endeavors with a sort of anonymity, something corroborated by the fact that they are nearly always collaborative and co-authored, so ‘he’ becomes ‘them’, and ‘them’ are usually an abstract entity. Authorship is presumably not an issue to Anton Vidokle, who, as an artist is allowed to act collaboratively, but to artistic research is his name that stands out of the crowd.

In the realm of artistic research authorship meets this duality: not taken as an aspiration, at the risk of rescuing Modernist fetishes and then compromising the appropriability and thus the instituting potential of research, it still is made present to offset neoliberal and cultural economic traits comprised in the fever pulling ‘collaboration’, ‘networking’ and ‘interdisciplinarity’. Also the dilution of authorship is promoted by the dematerialization of art which ceases to offer signed products to accommodate to market demands. So the “self-

effacing” aspect of Vidokle’s relative discretion can be partly traced in art history, as a consequence of developments of the second half of the twentieth century, in line with Arthur Danto’s account that “art makes the transition from experience to thought. Art becomes conceptual and one needs to turn to philosophy for an understanding of art (Danto, 1997)” (Pellapaisiotis, 2006, pp. 82-83). Pierre Huyghe, who together with Dominique Gonzales-Foerster and Philippe Parreno have founded École Temporaire in the period 1998-1999, is keen on the artist engagement with art as process or event – not as an inmate object, but as a doorstep to the everyday, or as a drawing of the everyday into art (Pellapaisiotis, 2006, p. 81). This was a strategy adopted by Pop Artists, to which Warhol’s Brillo Boxes are exemplary, or even first, in 1919, with Marcel Duchamp’s *The Fountain*. The praxis of Vidokle, as an artist researcher, stages exactly this Huyghe’s engagement with process or event: in an interview, Vidokle remarks that “One of the qualities that defines our contemporary notion of art is a certain claim to artistic sovereignty that historically became possible with the emergence of a public and of institutions of art, around the time of the French Revolution. An artist today can aspire to such sovereignty, which implies that, in addition to producing art, one also has to produce the conditions that enable such production and its channels of circulation. The production of these conditions can become so critical to the production of work that it assumes the shape of the work itself – such is the case with UNP” (Lind, Roelstraete & Vidokle, 2009). This led Sholis to point out as an additional reason for his relative dismissal of the mainstream contemporary artists group, despite his exhibitions across the world, its “... relative freedom from the network of institutions that is generally believed to confer legitimacy upon individual artistic practices”. Other renown artists have to employ their freedom in producing artworks able to “... cycle through such traditional venues as galleries and museums. In contrast, Vidokle, through e-flux, is able to produce, disseminate, and critically interrogate the ideas that animate his practice. He can also display the fruits of this process publicly and convene friends and collaborators to discuss and refine them. Vidokle doesn’t shun conventional artistic institutions, but e-flux is a robustly healthy ecosystem that grants him the opportunity to engage them selectively” (Sholis, 2009, p.7).

Anton Vidokle embodies an artist-as-producer, as he creates the structure to better convey his works that are mostly undertaking questionings against other institutions. His continuous recurrence to public discussions, publishing and screenings, as well as his engagement in organic and growing projects such as e-flux, all together award him the epithet of artist researcher, instead of a wider popularity as an artist. Where his practice is anchored, its s anchored in admiral: Leonardo da Vinci is for the encyclopedic genius as Anton Vidokle is for the artist research subjectivity.

The idea of art school underlying Manifesta 6 converged many concerns that artistic research share alike: self-awareness and self-criticism, resistance to art-as-commodity (although the core of Manifesta is an international exhibition, the parallel programme and ancillary activities allow for thinking for critical view on materialism), and, of course, education as a site of artistic practice. Both for artistic research and for the Manifesta project it loomed necessary to consider issues like the effects of institutionalization and the possibilities left for the intended practices.

Mai Abu ElDahab, Anton Vidokle and Florian Waldvogel's proposal of art school was thought as an art project: "An art project can be thought as a thinking site, functioning as a springboard from which ideas and concepts can be brought back to the notion of an art school, and give it new form and direction" (Pellapaisiotis, 2006, p. 81). The proposed school creates a space where learning and teaching are thought as exchange of information – knowing that, for information to be transformed into knowledge, time and dedication play important roles. Inquired about his expectations on *Nightschool*, Vidokle answered: "Night School can offer a lot, but the public also has to make an effort to extract what is truly beneficial in it. To give an analogy: There is a lot of information in the world, but it won't become knowledge unless you think about it in a focused way, really engage, and give it your attention. Similarly, what the public gets out of our program is conditioned by how much of themselves they will give to it. Of course not by way of the art market, or something you can immediately instrumentalize, but by way of ideas" (Bors, 2008).

It is a complex situation. 'Time', should be a relevant circumstance to bring on to the discussion in order to gauge how it is involved with an institutionalizing practice of artistic research, something that allows for a difference between institutionalization (or academization) and instituting in a rigorous sense of these words. Time is of pivotal importance in the management of the field of artistic research.

Time

Temporary art schools have been the outset of Vidokle's work in the study of education as a site for artistic production. Time has a lot to do with an enormous amount of things in life (and death!), and the way it conditions – ontologically, I would say – the identity of artistic research, deserves it detached attention. Most projects addressing the 'crisis of art school' take the form of simulacrum of art schools, some becoming actually real schools, but very few lasting for a

long period²¹⁶. Hakim Bey speaks of a Temporary Autonomous Zone, known as TAZ, which is a useful idea to better describe the temporarility necessary for disruptive practices in artistic research, considering its simultaneous institutional identity: “Getting the TAZ started may involve tactics of violence and defense, but its greatest strength lies in its invisibility--the State cannot recognize it because History has no definition of it. As soon as the TAZ is named (represented, mediated), it must vanish, it will vanish, leaving behind it an empty husk, only to spring up again somewhere else, once again invisible because undefinable in terms of the Spectacle” (Bey, 1985, n/p). Most of the projects of alternative art schools had a short life and sooner or later are closed or are appropriated. The most engaging ones play with time and present themselves as openly temporary (e.g. *unitednationsplaza* or Thomas Hirschhorn’s projects). Perhaps it’s led by this conscious that Manifesta has defined itself as a nomadic project reinventing at each edition. In this context and in order to succeed, it seems to be of vital importance to be temporary. The temporary dimension is also associated with a degree of autonomy that a lasting duration risks to lose. The project *Temporary Autonomous Research* (a word play with TAZ) organized by Henk Slager for The Amsterdam Pavilion of Shanghai Biennial 2012, asks if it’s not the temporary autonomy of academy that allows for research to be transformative.

Extended existence in time decreases the chances to keep the critical breathe in full force, and as time goes by increases the risks of absorption into ruling systems and dominant powers, nullifying any disruptive attempt. Without notice much of these temporary art schools have been neutralized and integrated in the cultural economy ecology, hazarding the approximation to infamous cultural industries.

Crystallization is a menace in the air over any project that is aimed at transformative goals, and built with that premise in mind. Power-resistance is a dynamic offset, with power forces trying to get to inhabited spaces all the time, and, simultaneously, with resistance tying to counteract power onrushes, which in turn is forced to reset and find new ways to advance. The idea of getting stuck in this dynamic is as fearsome as is very likely to occur at a given time. It’s a very hard task, if not impossible, to keep the movement for ever and, sooner or later, either for tiredness, or for defeat, accommodation is likely to follow. Achieving equilibrium of power-resistance, would eliminate the dynamics and consequently install a freezing state and, consequently, render a flop to the disrupting aspiration. Performativity, disruptiveness, and

²¹⁶ I’ve published about it in “Artistic research and the future art school or the call of a brave new world”, part of the book *Some Texts* published in the aftermath of the 2nd Encounter on Practices of Research in Arts Education. More info at: <http://www.livpsic.com/v4/detalhe01.php?id=30113&classificar=s>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

critique, all encompass an idea of transformation that is dependent on the verification of such dynamics.

Resistance is only possible since exist opposing powers to resist to, since new hindrances arise and so new resting strategies have to be sketched out. The crystallization of this dynamics, be it for an hypothetical triumph of resistance over power, or the other way round, disables any possibility of transformation. The more time passes by, the more increase the chances of crystallization, for counteracts get predictable and gradually lose their effect. As a result temporality, as a term-effect. has been regarded as a strategy of avoidance of the crystallization menace, for it is regarded as more successful a batch of several short different outputs than one sole and more extent persisting on the same strategy.

Sometimes temporality is related with flexibility, rather than with shortness of transitoriness (and sometimes with abundance, for instance in the PhD programmes).

Part of the success of *unitednationsplaza*, according to reports by Vidokle, was due to the fact that the participants were afforded all the necessary time for a profitable debate. Considering that it was a totally independent project, self-managed in its programme and facilities, allowed for absolute flexibility on the course of events. In comparison to *Nightschool*, the first achieved more success from the point of view of organization, than the second, also because if a discussion was high-up, they could maintain it for the time they thought was adequate, even if that meant all night long.

The generated effects and the impact of the project was also intimately related to its short duration. In the course of one year the collaborators proposed discussing a series of topics relating education and artistic production, through monthly seminars. It was an intensive programme, whose aim was also to generate a new kind of public, made up of people truly engaging in the problems approached – seemingly like the Ancient Greek school model, composed of a group of people that met below a tree and engaged in complex discussions. If *unitednationsplaza* would ever become a real school, facing the same problems and responding to the same bureaucracies that a real school has to go through, half of its success would probably be unattainable. *Nightschool*, which comprised a very slight increase of institutionalization, had its results immediately affected. The trick to ever prevent an increased weight of institutionalization, or the counterbalance to its reaching-out attempts of control, is to keep moving, to never freeze.

“What does thinking in terms of a temporary autonomy actually mean for topical art practices immersed in research-based forms and perspectives? Is there a direct connection between a temporary autonomous situation and the generation of critical artistic research?” were the

questions at the basis of *Temporary Autonomous Research*²¹⁷. The exhibition is comprised of the contributions of three artists, and each of them reflects on history and the construction of historical facts “... while demonstrating how autonomous artistic thinking adds novel dimensions to how we understand the world”. Although not directly addressing the art school in its institutional powers and constraints, the Amsterdam Pavilion considers the art school to be “... the last temporary autonomous zone: an experimental, free space for critical research, artistic thinking and non-conformist production of novel knowledge and alternative perspectives”. This statement seems in line with the notion of Steven Henri Madoff of “state of exception”²¹⁸, and also with the perspective offered by artistic research, which envisages its own practice hosted within institution as “... a temporary autonomous zone promoting temporary autonomous research, the human condition and its forms of representation are necessarily re-thought, re-actualized and re-activated in a continuous flow”²¹⁹. An emphasis on the temporary is a necessary condition for this autonomous research.

Autonomy, in this context, has a different meaning than that of Modernism, and it is majorly related to intellectual independence, rather than administrative independence. Whereas formally ruled by a central institution, autonomy here claims for a freedom of objects of study, and the permission to critically conduct research. According to Esa Kirkkopelto, artistic research occurs inside an institution – so, in fact, it needs the administrative control – and should also address the institution where it develops from in its research – making the conjugation of intellectual autonomy possible with formal centralism. Time, once again, is appointed an important role, since it cannot extend, otherwise central powers would clog the roads of intellectual independence. In regards of Temporary Autonomous Research, Henk Slager asks whether “... artistic research is only possible because of the temporary, autonomous zone institutionally made possible by the academy, as he envisages it as “.... The last location where – in the form of a semiotic guerilla and knowledge hacking – a protest can be filed against the ubiquitous visual culture and the opportunist diktat of the creative industries” (Slager, 2012, p.18). This seems to encounter what Kirkkopelto sets up as the distinction between institutionalization and instituting in the outcomes of artistic research. Unless able to present itself as an institution (publicly concerned, appropriable, of public utility), the results of artistic research may incur the risk of being simply institutionalized, that is to say, absorbed, neutralized, and engrossing the likes of cultural industries and knowledge

²¹⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/temporary-autonomous-research/> on 30.06.2015.

²¹⁸ For instance, in line with the following excerpt: “The benign factory of the art school is now in the midst of reformulation, pressured hydraulically by the forces of a larger life-world to recognize the changed field and reimagine a more socially complex state of exception, engaged in the dynamics of community, unafraid to allow itself to be provisional, and aware of what ‘free’ means” (Madoff, 2006, p. 284).

²¹⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/temporary-autonomous-research/> on 30.06.2015.

economy through a harmless infertile production whose only value is for the views of profit-making neoliberalism. An instituting practice could only occur in a Temporary Autonomous Zone, like the one described by Hakim Bey: "The TAZ is thus a perfect tactic for an era in which the State is omnipresent and all-powerful and yet simultaneously riddled with cracks and vacancies. And because the TAZ is a microcosm of that 'anarchist dream' of a free culture, I can think of no better tactic by which to work toward that goal while at the same time experiencing some of its benefits here and now" (Bey, 1985, n/p). The walk in the cracks is 'where magic happens'.

In the art world this temporality seems to be lacking even for the most independent artists. These may be administratively independent, yet their intellectual drifting has necessarily to anchor, sooner or later, in defined places, which are those fitting the demands of the contemporary art circuit. It has been said before that this is a reason for Anton Vidokle being apparently almost-anonymous as a mainstream artist. The academy appears as the last haven where the relationship with time still is possible to be experimented differently. However, its potentiality is far from being unanimous, and the cynical voices seem to overpass its supporters. Jan Verwoert has a very instigating remark on this balance between one and the other side in his text *School's Out!-?* (2006) published for the occasion of Manifesta 6 and prior to its cancellation. The potential of this academy is thought in terms of resistance by Irit Rogoff: "So thinking 'academy' as 'potentiality' is to think the possibilities of not doing, not making, not bringing into being at the very centre of acts of thinking, making and doing, it means dismissing much of the instrumentalizing that seems to go hand in hand with education, much of the managerialism that is associated with a notion of 'training' for this or that profession or market. Letting go of many of the understandings of 'academy' as a training ground whose only permitted outcomes are a set of concrete objects or practices. It allows for the inclusions of notions of both fallibility and actualization into a practice of teaching and learning (...)" (Rogoff, 2006, pp. 14-15).

Nevertheless there is the risk that the academy may not be able to transform itself in a temporary autonomous zone, or a sequence of these. A university, public or private, is set after the image of certain powers, be it of private groups or of the State. As a consequence, the space itself is institutionalized: it is recognizable, lasts in time, and obeys certain hierarchies and procedures, and reproduces specific rituals. However, the more dissatisfied, the more demanding and the more disruptive the researcher is, he or she will be able to find the cracks in the solid structure. And, from there, an autonomous space will be set inside the institution, a space that allows for time suspension. This would be the temporality of research, a place for art to try out things in laboratory-style and in speculation driven mode, removed

from the profit-making art world in its exterior. Or, just as Henk Slager puts it, “Is research perhaps a temporary thing that can only take place within the experimental sanctuary created by the institutional framework of art education? A space that generates a temporary autonomy where purely artistic research can take place free from instrumental and / or calculating preconditions”²²⁰.

In the interviews that I’ve conducted I came to realize that one of the reasons artists enroll in academy for doctoral studies is the looking for this sort of temporary autonomous zone, here combined with a notion of abidance, or long-term effect. The specificity of being in an academy, despite the expectable formalities, enables a space of suspension impossible to activate anywhere else in the ‘real’ world. It sort of acts as a simulacrum, just like most of the temporary schools rehearsed in different art projects, pursuing Hakim Bey’s Babylon: “Babylon takes its abstractions for realities”, and, as a Temporary Autonomous Zone, it is “... like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, *before* the State can crush it.” (Bey, 1985, n/p)

Simo Kellokumpu speaks of the Theatre Academy of Helsinki, where he has been undertaking his doctoral research, as a “... bit of a parallel world in the way that it is not based on production, it is not based on exhibiting, it’s not based on the goal, it’s not aimed to this way like what I experienced with in ten years that the aim is to make a production, and then you make a new one and then you make a new one. Whereas here of course it’s possible in the art world as well that you deal with the same question for years and many artists do that. But especially here somehow like I just experienced this one as relieving from certain ideological structures and economies and relations to art”. Simo Kellokumpu is a choreographer, who has been working in choreography as a performative act rather than in dance plays, or “context-choreography”, as he calls it. He has been developing a partnership in these terms with the French artist Vincent Roumagnac. After living in Berlin for many years, the chance to get enrolled in this PhD has brought him back to the same academy where he first graduated. During his absence, Helsinki has changed quite a lot, in terms of cultural and artistic initiatives and environment, and the programmes that are now being offered prove that. Berlin is still a vibrant city for any artist to live, but not so much in what respects higher education for artistic research. According to Simo, Helsinki is the right place to be for his current interests. Theatre Academy and Tutke, the research group he integrates there, have been extraordinary in providing the structure needed to pursue research as a performer. As he said, it is like “it is a

²²⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.mahku.nl/news/998.html>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

bit of a parallel world”, a suspended territory, an air bubble safe from market pressures. This allows Simo and his colleagues, especially when they are grant holders, to focus on their research topics fulltime: “Time is one of the biggest issues here in terms of not to have any pressure to make productions in order to support myself economically. So I was relieved from these kind of productional pressures in art-making when I entered this programme “. He continues: I would say that what I’ve done now in one and a half years here would have taken me, by myself, maybe three years to make it or to develop myself, to become more percipient, aware of my own practice and the problematics of it. It’s a very slow process anyway, but this has been feeding me in a critical way that it has given me also the support or, I mean, I’ve gone further, I’ve taken more steps than I would have done without. This is my experience.”²²¹. As he walks the cracks riddling the State structure, like those unveiled in doctoral course that is built in self-awareness (as it is the one in TeaK, for instance) the artist researcher is setting up a suspended space that ignores the frantic rhythm of market and commissions and, at the same time, accelerates the pace of research as a result from the striking conditions offered. The type of knowledge generated in this research is thoroughly related to the time one spends engaged in the same subject. It’s about the time and the supporting structure provided that one artist research should develop an exploratory work that he or she would be trying to develop anyway – though with more difficult, less time, and less feedback. Saara Hannula, performance artist and doctoral student in Aalto University, is developing a platform dedicated to artistic research called *arca | helsinki*²²² together with Simo Kellokumpu. In an interview with me she talked about the temporality of artistic research, highlighting the conditions offered by a doctoral programme to the sustained development of artistic work. She said, on her personal level, that it is a “... natural continuation for me to engage and work within an institutional frame, and to have a framework for what I’m doing, and a shared structure for the research process that I would be doing anyway. Also the fact that I can engage in a particular research process which I have to formulate beforehand, like I have to formulate my research questions and then follow them and I have to be disciplined about it; I think it helps me. Then I can delve deeper into something for a longer time, and then I also have external perspectives, outside help, or have others who can comment or support...”. Leena Rouhiainen, dance-choreographer, board of Society for Artistic Research, vice-dean and teacher of artistic research in TeaK, confirms that the production of knowledge that distinguishes artistic practice from contemporary art is intimately related to the time spent with a research problem: “We

²²¹ Excerpt from the interview I conducted with Simo Kellokumpu in TeaK, Helsinki. The entire edited transcription is in the “Annexes”.

²²² More info on <https://arcalhelsinki.wordpress.com/about/>, last time accessed on 30.06.2015.

think that this knowledge part is something that comes in and then, that you remain around one problem for four to six years makes a difference. They [independent artists] might of course use their own methods but they have one project and they concentrate on this issue, and they have another project and they concentrate on a different issue. When you set out doing artistic research, you're setting out exploring a problem for quite a few years". The proposed temporality is the potentially creative territory of artistic research within academy. What ones see as limited and conditioned, others spot as "temporary autonomy", and where some see threatened freedom, others find absence of "instrumental and/or calculating preconditions".

Nevertheless, time is not a quality guarantee. Obviously it depends on the degree of engagement established between the researcher and the subject of research. It depends, of course, in what one does with the time at disposal. With this in mind Yota Ioannidou disagrees time is not one of the strongest features: "Time is important. It's not necessary. It doesn't mean that brings you... I mean, time is relevant... It's very hard to do this fast, you know. But it's not the... the distinction, you know. It's not the most important point to distinguish the..."²²³. It is similar to the differentiation set between information and knowledge, once Anton Vidokle referred to *Nightschool*: "There is a lot of information in the world, but it won't become knowledge unless you think about it in a focused way, really engage, and give it your attention. Similarly, what the public gets out of our program is conditioned by how much of themselves they will give to it" (Bors, 2008).

The third axis to which time and artistic research are related to has to do with the relative novelty of artistic research. I have gone though it in more detail in "*Axioms and productivism*" in the second chapter "Framework". Although established as a disciplinary field since the first doctoral programmes have started to spring up, especially since the half of the first decade of the 2000s, it still is not by any means a clearly established disciplinary field. Until that time only scattered reflection and speculative texts reunited in proceedings and clueless anthologies focused on artistic research, normally in different names of artistic research. Maybe it will never be a disciplined field, maybe it does not want to, or maybe it will vanish before refining itself. In the present-day we have programmes that go with the name Doctoral programme in artistic research" and teaching positions in "artistic research", which for the one hand suggest a trendy phenomenon going on and the interest of studying it, and on the other hand evidences the strangeness of its novelty.

²²³ Excerpts from the interview I conducted with Yota Ioannidou in her studio in Amsterdam. The full transcription is in the "Annexes" of this dissertation.

Until enough time has passed, it is hard to answer certain interrogations that currently assail us. In the interviews I conducted I felt exactly that. Perhaps the questions posed were also too vague at times, but for most of them the only possible answers were but guesses.

The Research Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale – from 7th May to 28th June 2015

“The first Research Pavilion in Venice kicks off – let’s party!”. This is how the invitation to attend the opening of the Research Pavilion²²⁴ starts out. The welcoming event was marked by a concert of the arty punk rock band Chicks on Speed and received around a thousand people in the venue. It sounds like a great show, a great spectacle.

In the last few months a lot of enthusiasm has been spread regarding the organization of this Pavilion, the first in the history of the Biennale dedicated to artistic research, and born out of only four short months of preparation. It is commissioned by Anita Seppä, and curated by Jan Kaila, who recently was appointed Advisor of Artistic Research at the Swedish Research Council, and by Henk Slager. The organizer is University of the Arts of Helsinki, always in the forefront of artistic research cutting edge activities, which guarantees a span of events ranging between dance and theatre from TeaK, music from Sibelius Academy, and fine arts from KuvA. Accordingly, Jan Kaila says that: “This is also a showcase for the Uniarts Helsinki [University of the Arts of Helsinki]. It is meant to give shape to the research part which was a bit too vague. I think we know when this is over what kind of impulses it will give to artistic research. I am sure that the University of the Arts will leave a mark here”²²⁵. The artists taking (not all of them of Uniarts) part are: Tiong Ang & Alejandro Ramirez, Magnus Bærtås, Dirk Hoyer, Henna-Riikka Halonen, Simo Kellokumpu, Matts Leiderstam, Antti Nykyri, Maija Närhinen, Tuula Närhinen, Janis Rafa, Heli Rekula, and Hito Steyerl. Cooperating in the organization were well known entities and academies such as EARN, Valand Academy (University of Gothenburg), MaHKU (Utrecht Graduate School of Visual Art and Design), JAR (Journal for Artistic Research) and GradCAM (Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media, Dublin).

The pavilion consists of a top-level international contemporary art exhibition and a programme of events, both focusing on artistic research. The events span from “conversations”, “talks”, “discussions”, and “symposia” (these mostly organized by FAFA/KuvA) to “performances”, “interventions”, “laboratories” and “workshops”, according to the programme in the Catalogue. Expectedly, both JAR - Journal of Artistic Research and PARSE will offer reviews and commentaries on the achievements of The Research Pavilion after the closing event on the

²²⁴ More information in the website of University of the Arts of Helsinki: <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/research-pavilion>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

²²⁵ Excerpt of interview between Dirk Hoyer and Jan Kaila. Retrieved from: <https://www.uniarts.fi/en/blogs/research-pavilion/showcase-experimentality>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

28th of June 2015.

In an interview Dirk Hoyer did to Henk Slager, he asked the curator: “What is the difference between an Artistic Research exhibition and a regular exhibition?” Slager answered that: “A research exhibition is obviously an exhibition. And every exhibition has to be visually strong and intellectually exciting. What I think is specific about the Research exhibition is that it includes a lot of discursive moments, so in the same space there are lot of events, activities, seminars that also contextualize the projects and create other perspectives. It offers an ongoing process”²²⁶.

The relationship between contemporary art and artistic research is explored through the axis of experimentality. This actually sounds not so surprising for a post-conceptualist and post-structuralist environment: after accepting the reconnection necessity of the society of the twentieth-first century, the idea of a state of stability has been settled up. This idea is characterizing artistic events, which in turn are molded by the inescapable neoliberal context wherein they occur, and which is responsible for flattening the aspiration of revolutionary shifts into a climate of more or less controlled experimentalism²²⁷. I’ve written previously in chapter 2: “Contemporary rhythms have not armed us with sufficiently accurate tools or the right frames to analyze events in the globalized era. Everything happens too fast in the experimental regime... Images produced in these circumstances are therefore playing the *aestheticization* of its content: the numberless biennials only rarely propose experiments of interest out of the *cul-de-sac*, and also the manic neoliberal-prompted research impetus are two good examples of attempts of capturing a reality that in turn act as their de-functionalization” (p. 55).

The Research Pavilion anchors its activities in the following questions, according to the information on the Catalogue: “How does experimentality manifest itself in contemporary art? Did the discourse on artistic research and its methodologies redefine our ideas regarding experiments and experimentality? Does current research generate new types of methodologies (such as affective or multisensory approaches) reassessing the nature of experimentation?” (University of the Arts Helsinki. 2015). For a more in-depth problematization of these issues, the questions should be addressed with the consciousness of the ‘state of experimentalism’ where contemporary artistic production is embedded in, rather than standing with the devaluing of the term with which Kaila apparently sees it. Answering the question of Dirk Hoyer, “What does experimentality mean in the context of this

²²⁶ Excerpt of the interview between Dirk Hoyer and Henk Slager. Retrieved from: <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/blogs/research-pavilion/birth-pavilion>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

²²⁷ I have explored further these ideas in chapter 2 “Framework”, in particular in the part “From autonomy to new materialism or how did we move from *experientiality* to *experimentalism*”.

exhibition”, Jan Kaila answered: “It’s a loose term. But the problem is: where are the works when you speak about artistic research. In that sense it’s an experiment that you perform knowledge as works. It’s more how the artistic research is presented that is experimental”²²⁸. Nevertheless the awareness of the dualism present in the notion of experimentalism (in common sense’s side as a sort of *avant-garde* practice for the nondescript sensation that the name “experimentality” carries out; and in the critical vision side I have been gone through in this text, it comes as a *cul-de-sac* of our time – even though the *cul-de-sac* comprises potentiality) is fundamental for an informed perspective over the motto of this presumably top-level Research Pavilion for the future of this artistic event. The pageantry that University of the Arts puts on it has become a characteristic trait of this Research Pavilion.

The context helps the pomp raising. La Biennale di Venezia is probably the most respectable contemporary art large scale exhibition event in the world. The fact that a pavilion for explicit artistic research has been settled in such artistic expert environment is doubtlessly signaling the importance gained by artistic research in the art world. The work of its organizer, commissioner and curators are definitely paying off for the establishment of artistic research as field. Whereas the previous incursions I’ve gone through in regards of Manifesta and e-flux activities, mainly in the person of Anton Vidokle, are important for artistic research developments in an indirect way, this Research Pavilion has broken modesty and gone shameless of the academic condition and other associated pre-conceived ideas towards artistic research. Once again, the Finnish (with the help of Dutch Henk Slager) have lived up to the epithet of pioneers of artistic research²²⁹.

Other inquiries were set on the Catalogue: “Does the concept of laboratory retain its sense in the context of artistic research? Could artistic research laboratories be seen as strategic, transdisciplinary platforms that enable research to be reimagined in new ways, i.e. by creating aesthetic preconditions for experimentation allowing topical problems to be addressed in some hybrid form? Does an artistic research laboratory facilitate new connections between science, aesthetics, and politics?” The organizers of the pavilion seem to regard the erected space in the trail of laboratory-like understandings of art. The conception goes quite in line with the idea of “experimentality”, while it also sort of invokes traces of the “state of exception” (Madoff, 2006) that shape the entity of the art academy – or the “parallel world” referred to by Simo Kellokumpu in our interview in respect to the doctoral programme at TeaK: “... based on my experience it is a bit of a parallel world, in the way that it is not based

²²⁸ Excerpt of the interview between Dirk Hoyer and Jan Kaila. Retrieved from: <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/blogs/research-pavilion/showcase-experimentality>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

²²⁹ In a booklet launched for the occasion of The Research Pavilion compiling the research proposals of ten TAHTO students it is written: “The University of Arts Helsinki – pioneering artistic research”. The booklet, by TAHTO Research School for the Artistic Research is titled *Artistic Research for the Advanced – Ten Proposals*. University of the Arts: Helsinki. 2015.

on production, it is not based on exhibiting, it's not based on the 'goal'. It's not aimed this way, like what I experienced in ten years that the aim is to make a production, and then you make a new one, and then you make a new one and a new one and so on. Of course it's possible in the art world as well that you deal with the same question for years and many artists do that. But especially here I just experienced as relieving from certain ideological structures, and economies, and relations to art and experiencing art."²³⁰

The approach through the laboratory frame raises a problematic view, since it isolates artistic research from the contemporary art territory. This could not be the case since the framework is that of the Venice Biennial, but yet the artistic research proposals are being explored – and experimented – in a laboratory like facility, where rules of the art market may not apply. The event was drawn as a party, and the feeling is that it goes on on a parallel ground to the main route of exhibitions. This detachment sort of compromises an eventual study of the impact this Research Pavilion is playing in the contemporary art realm, since it is, from the beginning, designed as sideline thing.

Even though there are years separating the earliest Manifesta (1996) – as well as the was-to-be Manifesta 6 (2006) - and The Research Pavilion of the Venice Biennale (2015), the parallel role that is attributed to research endeavors is maintained.

The most remarkable aspect of this Research Pavilion is, to my view, the straightforwardness with which it adopts artistic research's nomenclature. However, in terms of its programme and contextualization in the bigger frame of the Venice Biennale, It does not seem to bring anything outstandingly new in comparison to previous projects – previous projects which also involve most of the names gathered around The Research Pavilion. For instance *As the Academy Turns*, included in Manifesta 8 (2010), has obvious similarities, as it presents an exhibition, symposia and an info lab. In *As the Academy Turns* doctoral research projects from leading European academies were presented. The names of Jan Kaila, Hito Steyerl, Magnus Bærtås and Henk Slager were also involved.

It seems that the analysis of the impact of artistic research in contemporary art, rather than detecting evidence in works of art being shown, has to direct the study to why is it kept marginal to the main spines of these large scale events that define the field of contemporary art practice.

In a certain way it seems that the more one addresses the issue of research in art, and explicitly that of artistic research, the more it is presented detached from what is hosted as artistic practice in the main pavilions. Thus, if artistic research is about making explicit research

²³⁰ Excerpt from the interview I conducted with Simo Kellokumpu at TeaK in Helsinki. The entire edited transcription is in the "Annexes".

processes that are inherent to artistic practice of these artist researchers, it seems that it also contributes to the separation of what otherwise, and even though in a less spectacular way, would still be juxtaposed.

Commentary on the excursion of the impact: we've been excavating parallel programmes, but what about the main exhibitions?

The way artistic research is impacting contemporary art is something that the previous writing has been sketching out: a path walked towards dematerialization and incorporating the so-called educational turn. This is how research reveals itself within the realm of art making. It is so, at least in theory. For artistic research to be artistic research, it has to be research intersected with an institution (Esa Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p). The more generalized sense brings on the academy as the harbourer institution, yet it is not exclusively. Kirkkopelto has written "... artistic research is institutional research, research most often conducted in an art institution, for instance in an art university" (2011, n/p), leaving space for other sorts of institutions. A museum, a biennial or a gallery are thus also eligible institutions, and actually very adequate, since the object is placed within the artistic realm.

A lot of work has been already developed focusing attention in the intersection of academy and artistic research, resulting in numerous publications and in funded international projects held by networks such as ELIA, SHARE, EARN and EUFRAD. If we consider artistic research as a territory developing from the contact between art and academy, then the links to education have been far more explored than those with contemporary art. The relationship between artistic research and the art world still needs to be explicitly investigated and is yet to be written (Borgdorff, 2012, p.4). Even though I am not adventuring myself here with a complex, accurate, and exhaustive study of this issue, I tried to leastways drift from academic context to inquire the impact of artistic research in the artistic field, looking into the exhibiting spaces of the art world.

Several particular exhibition events have been mentioned for the emphasis they put on core issues, and for the turning point kind of happenings they provided, every time reinforcing the field of artistic research, be it for directly addressing the subject, or for developing orbital aspects such as associated subjectivities and discursive changes. These timid yet determined steps have been sighted especially in parallel programmes of the main exhibitions, in publications and in curators' testimonies. Apropos I am quoting again Hedwig Fijen in *Notes for an Art School*: "Even if Manifesta is best known – to professionals and the general public alike – for its series of biennial exhibitions and for the high profile of its many participants, the series of independent programmes developed by the International Foundation Manifesta has

played a crucial role in its development and in the realization of its objectives” (2006, n/p). The relevance of these parallel events is the topic that I want to bring in in the commentary of the digression through contemporary art events in this chapter. This emphasis on the parallel location will consequently move the impact of artistic research in contemporary art from its core manifestations to more peripheral aspects I will attempt to highlight next. Despite the enthusiasm surrounding the much talked Research Pavilion partaking the 2015 edition of Venice Biennale, the results prove to be similar to the previous organized events: a series of exhibitions, conferences and workshops sidelining the main programme of the Biennale. As we approach the end of this trip it matters to ask: and what about the main exhibitions? How did they articulate the changes that the surrounding discourses seem to be pointing at? How are these exhibitions relating to public-ness? In reference to Kirkkopelto’s ideas, how are these artworks being disposed as public utilities and how are they setting themselves to appropriation at the cost of originality and of authorship?²³¹ This is a complex issue. Are they researching the related institutions, from “... the aesthetic institutions of perception and affect to current political institutions”? To which extent have they “... the potential to change these institutions and, finally, why should they be changed?” (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p).

There is a possible line of comparison that can be experimented between artistic practice and what has been called artistic research. The comparison line is what Kirkkopelto enunciates as the research these practices do on the institutions where they happen, on political institutions and on the institutions of perception, as well as on the degree of transformation they promote.

For as much as most contemporary art practices trigger reflexive processes in the visitor, they do not aim at changing the conditions of the biennials where they are hosted, do they? Why should they? Why would mainstream artists, those who take part in huge events like the Venice Biennale (or Istanbul or São Paulo Biennials, or Documenta, or Manifesta, or others alike) strive to defy the conditions of exhibition of those places, the very conditions that allow them inside the art world, for survival and for success?

For now it is acceptable a distinction between an instituting artistic research project and a contemporary art work in the basis of how they address institutions. The former assumes for itself the charge of changing them, through research, while the second not so much. Indeed what follows is a very problematic assumption that sets a precarious characterization of contemporary art. It probably doesn’t sound very accurate, let alone fair, to suggest that all of

²³¹ “An invention as soon as it appears, i. e. as it is recognized as an invention, paradoxically loses its originality, its *droit d’auteur* and opens up as a disposable means to everybody (Derrida). Artistic research makes up inventions which, insofar as they are of public utility, are also (at least potentially) new institutions and thus carry out critical changes in the institutional status quo” (Kirkkopelto, 2011, n/p).

contemporary art is comfortably neo-liberalized, considering that it does not take the role of changing institutions. Not at the will of artists, for sure. But is it?

Criticality enabled by contemporary artworks varies in magnitude, but regardless of their acuteness, the neoliberal system seems not to be caught by surprise: it remains in operation, at different paces and with some needed updates, but still working.

In the 60s, when performance art first tried to fight against art-as-commodity, hindering the market purchasing, and hindering archival, museums and curators found alternative ways to absorb, neutralize and appropriate these actions. They soon acquired the props, the photography and the videos documenting the ephemeral acts, showing that in one way or another, the critical and transformative aspirations of contemporary art could ever be neutralized.

To this respect, Boris Groys, in conversation to Anton Vidokle, did a fearsome yet important remark: "... the power of 'critical theory' depends substantially on faith in the power of capitalism itself. You have to believe that capitalism is indestructible, that the work of art is always a commodity, etc., to be able to be permanently critical in the Marxist way. Critical theory believes in its own truth because it believes in the historical stability of the object of its critical analysis" (Vidokle & Groys, 2006, pp.69-70). In other words, the possible critical belief, or resistance mobile, for someone who believes that the system is insuperable, is to subjoin that belief with an amount of discomfort, disquietedness and the right dose of an instituting spirit. All this with the assurance that the importance about the path is not where it leads – or not leads –, but it is the verb 'to walk' through it. Walk the path is therefore the utopian force that keeps contemporary art possible and prevents its crystallization, by forcing the resilient system to answer the different provocations. Utopias are forever unaccomplished, and this is exactly what keeps their gear on.

If one cannot actually change the system, in its art-as-commodity foundation, perhaps then art can become a form of dandyism, not exactly in the exuberant terms of early Modernist sense, but reporting, for instance, to unofficial Russian art of the 60s and 70s that worked on the premise of rejecting the Soviet system: "People were not thrown out of the institutions because they made a certain kind art. They made a certain kind of art just to demonstrate that they didn't belong to the 'Soviet herd'" (Vidokle & Groys, 2006, p. 65). Are possibly the research-led artistic projects a similar attempt?

I am thinking of projects such as *unitednationsplaza*, *Nightschool*, *The Building*, *Martha Rosler Library*, *New York Conversations*, *e-flux*, and *Exhibition as Art School*. For a number of reasons, the contributions of Anton Vidokle, collaborators of e-flux, and other artist researchers, have been influential in varied directions, yet contextually emerging differently than Russian

artworks of the second half of the twentieth century. Vidokle's projects emerged independently and experimentally within institutions, at their in-between spaces – unlike the Russians, whose artistic endeavors were developed beyond the official institutions. Vidokle's and e-flux's collaborators' productions did not assume the forms of traditional artistic works, because developments in artistic movements have opened for other opportunities, and because by adopting different shapes they have escaped the sucking forces of market – these are not so easily escapable to artists-artists, namely independent artists, since even though they are not bounded to academies and funding systems, in order to be included in mainstream circuits their practice has to accommodate to certain demands, like be liable to be exhibited, saleable, and archived. e-flux's projects, for being more or less institutional, have at the same time managed to help their authors and visitors to question the conditions that set discourse, production and circulation of art and, while doing so, turning this questioning into art practice – into the art practice itself. As a result, a series of conversations is thought as performances, a text is a piece of art and a journal is a hall of exhibitions, an artist's library is an interactive show, and an art school is an art work.

We have reached a point where the questioning of artistic circumstances and the practice of art have met and merged, adopting forms that convey both acts. Artistic research can also be envisaged from this perspective, as the contextual opportunity for such happening in contemporary art. This does not mean, however, that contemporary art has one way turned into such hybridization. There is plenty of room in contemporary art and plurality is still one of the trademarks of contemporary proposals.

However, none of these is completely new. In these terms, Joseph Beuys could be rewarded the truly pioneering title for artistic research. His reconstruction of *Free International University of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research*²³², at Documenta in 1977, is a landmark to set a beginning for the field. Apart from other concomitant drives that more or less pushed things out, *Free International University* earned a place in history and turned to be quite influential to artistic demarches concerned with political commitment, activism, institutional critique or the trended in the educational turn. From Beuys to today's Research Pavilion of Venice Biennale is a whole way of remarks unfolding.

A sharply look at recent international exhibitions shows work from a variety of ranges, *medium-wise*. It is hard to tell the tendency that prevails, if it matters at all. Instead what remains is a wide palette of propositions addressing a roster of topics hard to limit. Maybe a

²³² Originally founded in 1973 in Beuys studio in Dusseldorf it functioned as a free school, a space for free research on the future of society. More info at <http://museumarteutil.net/projects/free-international-university-fiu-for-creativity-and-interdisciplinary-research/>. Last accessed on 30.06.2015.

propensity for organic projects, collaboratively organized in abstract platforms such as the internet can be spotted with more frequency – a sign of time.

Sharing similarities with e-flux practices, DIS collective²³³ has been appointed to curate the 2016 Berlin Biennial, which will probably endorse most of their own views about contemporary art making and their contextual relation. In 2014, the previous edition of Berlin exhibition claimed to be presenting works that “... resist their incorporation and narration in terms of a history of art; they are primarily propositions set against the current social and political functions of the image as the dominant form of representation”. Curator Juan A. Gaitán goes on: “The emphasis that the 8th Berlin Biennale places on artistic process is meant to foreground the vital need in contemporary artistic practices to perform a simultaneous, and perhaps aporetic, exploration of reality and the mechanisms of its representation. Political expediency is not art’s purpose; art aims to generate a counter-image that is able to distinguish truth from power”²³⁴.

Process and representation come in line; like instituting artistic research, Gaitán’s desire seems to be the transformation of process in forms of presentations, in terms that simultaneously question the unavoidable inscriptions that a representational system involves. If institutional contexts have been taken as fearsome it is due to the narratives of representation they reinforce. Presentations, the flip side of these, although utopian or aporetic strategies, are in both the art world and in artistic research domain the surmise of a desired counter-image. Gaitán aims at what a Marxist influenced philosophy regards as impossibility: since criticality is only attainable in continuous in face of the all-powerful capitalist stability, truth and power are no longer distinguishable. It does not mean, however, that there is nothing to be done in respect to this overwhelming perception, as it is exactly at this point that an aporetic use of art practice and utopian artistic research arise as contemporary articulations of visual regimes (and more than visual, also audio and body regimes) and society. Notwithstanding these articulations seem to occur always in layered power-knowledge surfaces - and this is the truth. In light of the impossibility of exteriority of the institution, remains the chance of working the established relation with it. An artist whose practice doesn’t fit the established institutions has two options: either he changes his own *praxis*, or he forces the existing institutions to accept his work – in a variety of creative manners. Also an established artist remains attractive to the institution inasmuch as he continuously tests his presence and reception in that institution. Initial notoriety earned by performance art as a resisting practice was due to its intent of

²³³ DIS American collective have a range of works that include site-specific exhibitions and online projects. It has been appointed to curate the 9th Berlin Biennial to take place in 2016. More info at <http://www.berlinbiennale.de/blog/en/8th-berlin-biennale> and <http://dismagazine.com/about/>. Last time accessed on 30.06.2015.

²³⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.berlinbiennale.de/blog/en/allgemein-en/juan-a-gaitan-in-the-catalogue-of-the-8th-berlin-biennale-35931> on 30.06.2015.

avoiding the materialism that seemingly catered the market and hegemonic museums. As noted already, these practices soon were absorbed, as documentation of the events and memorabilia were the acquired materials that maintained the money gear running. In order to make these practices resistance-significant, Tino Sehgal has proposed something that, although not changing the fundamental structures of the museum, constituted a compromise beneficial for both: Tino Sehgal is the first artist believed to have sold the rights of a performance. His *Kiss* (2004) was sold to MoMA for the amount of \$70,000 (Kino, 2010). For someone whose career has been constructed in the basis of defying the expectations of institutions in the art world, this only shows how differently and, why not, unexpectedly, one can actually challenge expectations.

The work of Tino Sehgal is especially interesting for the principles it contains. Whereas documentation can be regarded as the current issue of artistic research and a largely explored topic in contemporary art, Sehgal reacts to it by suggesting 'constructed situations' instead of performances, which refuse any documentary pictures or video and any sort of explanation in catalogues and parallel texts. Tino Sehgal presumes thus to question the institutional powers in generating and containing knowledge as capital.

Both Tino Sehgal and Rirkirt Tiravanija's works point to a state of affairs in contemporary art that prospects a territory based on experience. Most of these works cannot be collected neither purchased (in the case of Sehgal they can only be re-enacted at high prices). Works conceived in the context of the so-called educational turn also consider most of the topics approached by the contemporary institutional critique. Alike Sehgal, Vidokle's *unitednationsplaza* was interested in the institutions of knowledge containment, in their privileged channels of communication, and ultimately on how art reached the public. The sum of these concerns is summed up by the representations of a regime of public-ness. The 'experientiality' (in opposition to materiality) is a sharpening version of Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics of the 1990s, which often risked to fall into mere interactivity and, from there, to anything beyond pure entertainment²³⁵ (not that it is still completely safe, according to some reviews, for instance Andrew Frost's article in *The Guardian*²³⁶). Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (1998) was easily perverted, taken too superficially, mainly because he missed to stress a seemingly fundamental difference between Modern and Post-Modern positions in regards to the crucial concept of totality (here between Modern and what I am taking as experiential artists, or even between Modern-minded contemporary skeptical artists and artist

²³⁵ "L'Experience de la durée", the motto of Lyon Biennial curated by Nicolas Bourriaud.

²³⁶ The Guardian accusing Tino Sehgal of being "a prank": <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/australia-culture-blog/2014/feb/06/tino-sehgal-this-is-so-contemporary-review>. Last accessed on 30.06.2015.

researchers): the first were too bounded to a notion of totality, from which derived autonomy and originality, and which was all-the-way led by Enlightenment. Like Modernity, these projects attached to an eagerness for totality failed, exactly in the same measure their agents failed to regard the potentiality inherent to micro-politics. In the place of changing the world, the post-modern and post-structuralism inspired artists seek to test structures in their locality, in micro-levels. Instead of pursuing a new meta-narrative, these artists are propelled by Foucault's idea of resistance. In his Marxist inclination, the French philosopher considers macro-politics to be beyond human intervention, privileging instead actions towards individuals and groups of individuals. Following these ideas artists engaging in institutional critique, and playing a kind of experiential artworks, rarely direct their critique openly towards an entire political system or act under the desire of 'a better world'. 'Experientiality' and relational artworks act at the micro-political level, in a great extent in the exchange model of information, of capital, of knowledge. This of course makes the visitor/viewer/reader a pivotal importance in the whole process. It is not by chance that Vidokle's main concern with *unitednationsplaza* and *Nightschool* was the engagement of the public with art. In order to promote change, art and research aim at changing spectators first. And this is not achievable through simple re-enactments of human interaction.

The whole discourse enabled by the emergence of artistic research seems to experiment the same goals (and the same risks of all this 'experientiality' tried out in contemporary art. Public-ness is of utter importance in the academic realm, even for more obvious reasons than the experiential art. Here and there, spectatorship comes as a central issue, despite not always in a direct manner. Research concerns with production, documentation and distribution are concerns with public-ness. There is a very strong emphasis being put in the process also in educational discourses, and the ideas of 'in-progress' and 'construction' are implicit to the tasks of organizing seminars and conferences in a regular basis in the context of doctoral programmes. These events, like the exhibitions inspired by lineages of institutional critique and relational aesthetics, are set towards an exchange of experiences, preconceived as useful for learning purposes and for critical enactment in researchers. The art world has become an experiential world, where instead of knowledge is provided information for the visitor to acquire and eventually transform. The academy, at the doctoral level of arts education, proceeds in the same ways, being the student and the researcher responsible for mobilizing his or her own references in order to extract the most possible out of lived experiences.

My event *Conversations on Artistic Research*, held in November 2014 in Porto, was visibly unattended – or maybe boycotted? – by artists-who-do-not-consider-themselves-intellectuals teaching in the Faculty of Fine Arts where *Conversations* took place. I was told by one of them

that an event configured like a conference would certainly not fall in the grace of the artists' community of the academy. Hence my extreme care in the appliance and in the excavation of word meanings; I am well aware that they do make a difference. Once more, there is no truth, only power relations fabricating beliefs. Should this be the reason why the Society for Artistic Research has not characterized their events more than merely 'events'? Interestingly, apart from *Mind the Gap!*, which was categorized as "a concert series in symposium format"²³⁷, the other events of SAR are just named that, events. No symposium, no seminar, no exhibition, no festival, no conference specificity.

What becomes heartbreakingly visible at this point is that there are huge similarities between late developments in contemporary art and in what have been the late changes occurred in the field of artistic research. This is simultaneously surprising and not so surprising. As a matter of fact, artistic research has been widely informed as intimately connected to the art world. Research activities in the field of arts education are not autonomous in the sense that they are due to i) central administration of the academy, and ii) their intellectual independence is conditional. It goes as far and as close as the artistic nerve of their authors allow for. For a reason – for a number of reasons –, doctoral courses ask for practicing candidates, and prefer to accept well established artists in the programme rather than recently graduated individuals. This simultaneity of grounds is enough to justify its actual overlapping, and thus work done in the artistic realm is the basis for work done in the context of artistic research.

Nevertheless artistic research has been affirming as a disciplinary field of its own right, i. e., not constructed in dependency of the art world, but instead through an interchanging relationship. Identity traits revealed in specific potentialities have been nourished in the public image of artistic research: it promotes self-reflexivity that art world pressures tend to foreclose (Mick Wilson argues that such self-reflexivity shouldn't be the strong dish of artistic research, "... given the already endemic risks of narcissism within the artist role..." [Wilson, 2014b]), it attempts, even if subliminally, to merge theory and practice (however, Jan Kaila is peremptory in stating the impracticability of such aspiration [Kaila, 2008]²³⁸), and it comprises a unique instituting capacity that escapes art making, for the last is not attentive to public utility.

Moreover I've been extensive in pointing out 'institutional potentialities' in the "institutionalization" part of the previous chapter. Structural weaknesses of the field have been disguised in arguments that report to the novelty and uncertainty of the field. The baffling conclusion is that the impact of artistic research in the contemporary art is hard to

²³⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/33841/37723/1022/567>. Last access on: 30.06.2015.

²³⁸ Jan Kaila stated that: "The original aim of postgraduate education and the demonstration of knowledge and skills was to merge theory and art. This idea proved to be so hopelessly Utopian, however, that when I was elected Professor of Artistic Research in 2004, I suggested that the demonstration be split into two separate components, a theoretical part and a production part" (Kaila, 2008, n/p).

avail, since it is packed in parallel programmes of the main exhibitions. Inasmuch as artists adopt research strategies in their practices, they will be making art more often than they will be doing artistic research. What is on is that the artistic research phenomenon is not being embodied more in the artistic field than specific artistic developments. And since it does not make a difference, it may be the case that there is not difference to be made.

The wrong questions deliver the wrong answers. Perhaps we are looking in the wrong places. As a conclusion, one possible answer to where the impact of artistic research is most felt in contemporary art seems to be found not in the palpable materiality produced, but instead in the convictions and attitude of the contemporary artist. The subjectivity of this contemporary artists is likely to be right place to find the right answers.

How research is being made present in the subjectivity of the artist

Loonie van Brummelen & Siebren de Haan have started their chapter in the book *See it Again, Say it Again* (2011)²³⁹, edited by Janneke Wesseling, with a quotation from the American Anthropological Association's Principles of Professional Responsibility that much resembled an accurate description of the artistic fieldwork: "They are involved with their discipline, their colleagues, their students, their sponsors, their subjects, their own and host governments, the particular individuals and groups with whom they do their fieldwork, other populations and interest groups in the nations within which they work. (...) In a field of such complex involvements, misunderstandings, conflicts and the necessity to make choices among conflicting values are bound to arise and to generate ethical dilemmas" (as quoted in van Brummelen & de Haan, 2011, p.118). Long before that, in 1996, Hal Foster has published *The return of the real*, which included the chapter *The artist as ethnographer*, where the overlapping of the artistic personality with other professional identities was again a matter of study. In the case was ethnography, and again anthropology, but the relevant aspect is that the subjectivity of the artist at the turn of the century was, alike the works produced, very porous and interconnected with other subjectivities. It is also evidence of the case mentioned by Erik Viskil in our interview, where he said that "It [art] can do everything that other people do as well, or could do as well, but artists do it in their own way, according to their personal standards"²⁴⁰.

The important point is not a similarity with anthropology or any other discipline, but the fact that the artistic self is open and connected. It is a remark that accompanies the developments operated in the artistic field itself, with art making blurring the lines that divide art and life,

²³⁹ The chapter name is "Some thoughts about artistic research", pp. 117-121.

²⁴⁰ Excerpt of the interview that I conducted with Erik Viskil at KABK, The Hague. The entire interview is available in the "Annexes".

and thus integrating life into the process. The dematerialization that characterized the process was now also being felt at the level of the subject and dislocating the artist from his exclusive nest, making him climb down the ivory tower, to absorb personally the shifts happening in the art field, as well as in the social and political worlds. If the market asked for multi-tasking workers, fluidity and capacity do adapt, the contemporary artist was also committed to experiment other languages rather than his own, and to penetrate fields beyond traditional art environments.

As I've long gone through in previous chapters, since the focus of art has shifted from the pursuit of autonomy to the integration with life, political and social affairs, that the subjectivity of the artist has also shifted from the *flâneur*, *dandy* and *byronistic* persona, with huge Romantic reminiscences, to the artist-as-producer whose concerns are the public-ness of the created artworks – as if, at last, autonomy had been recognized as an utopian aim. It is in this context of a spring of subjectivities in the artist subjectivity – to which I relate all Basbaum's "etc.-artists" (2003), as well as the artist-as-narrator as a possible, whereas not exclusive – artist researcher subjectivity that much more suggests a *modus operandi* rather than a way-to-be an artist. And since one can identify the artist-as-narrator through the practice and the objects (or non-objects) produced, my inquiry about the artist researcher in general is placed at the same aspect: how is the practice of this kind of artists evidencing their research-like minds and framing? I go back to Dirk Hoyer's question posed to Henk Slager a propos of The Research Pavilion, "What is the difference between an Artistic Research exhibition and a regular exhibition?". Back then Slager betook the "... discursive moments", claiming that an exhibition of artistic research offered in the same place a "... lot of events, activities, seminars that also contextualize the projects and create other perspectives. It offers an ongoing process"²⁴¹. So does it mean that an exhibition of artistic research is an exhibition of art plus the discursivity of parallel activities such as symposia and workshops – and every other term one feels comfortable with, including "conversations", "discussions", "talks", "debates", "lectures", "roundtables", "laboratories"? What this eventually means is that the artworks themselves do not necessarily embody the research processes through which the artist goes during their conception neither testify the research environment from where they are born. Therefore, the works produced for the practical part in a doctoral programme will not necessarily embody the research developed in their name. As a result, the configuration of an exhibition of artistic research does not stray far from the configuration of these doctoral programmes: the practical part of the programme coinciding with the exhibited artworks, and

²⁴¹ Retrieved from: <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/blogs/research-pavilion/birth-pavilion>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

the two of them to be completed with the discursivity, either of the dissertation or of the sideline activities of the exhibition.

I have been concerned with the fact that I couldn't figure out how the work of art was embodying the influence of research. I had in mind a similar inquiry to Janneke Wesseling's, which I found only later: "What does artistic research *yield* for art, in the artistic sense? Does it produce better or different art? It is not enough to say: it does. Because if it does, how does it affect art?" (2009, n/p). Of course I didn't want to consider works presented as research, neither research that was considered by the author as an artistic 'object' – and object is between quotes because it is likely the case that it was not about any object at all, but a dematerialized outcome -, but something more subtle and integrated. The label of works dealing with text, in a visual manner, did not fit to my concern, and were not corresponding to what was expected from artistic research. More than the objects delivered by Barbara Kruger, Lawrence Weimer, Mel Bochner, Fiona Banner, Thomas Hirschorn and others, who in many cases objectify text, I wanted to go deeper to the processes that have rendered such objects. Moreover, to match text and artistic research seems to me to be pointing a way too inflexible to the practice of artistic research, positing its core activity in writing and leaving art making for non-research tools and environments. It matters to stress that artistic research is intertwined with the practice in a way that they cannot be taken so alienated from each other and relegated to different responsibilities. This is a major concern in PhDArts, where an effort is put in the entanglement between the two parts: "Point of departure for us is the nature of artistic research *within art itself* (and not artistic research in relation to other disciplines within academia). In other words, research and development in art and design features unique characteristics that must be preserved and advanced *on their own terms*. The *artistic result* is the main thing. This is the most important way in which this PhD differs from regular university PhD's: its profile is strictly artistic." (Wesseling, 2009, n/p). She adds: "The discursive, verbal component of the research is important in gaining insight into and examining this knowledge. Research in art is characterized by interaction with artistic practice: it is an inseparable part of the work of the artist".

What was really disquieting me was my apparent inability to ascertain what influence was having the artistic research phenomenon in more interior layers of the work: on how it was conceived, developed, realized, documented and distributed, and how all these steps were owing to a transversal research *ethos*. I was dissatisfied with answers that stressed the ongoing processing trait of the objects of artistic research, as if this was self-explanatory and therefore enough to ask for.

With time I came to the conclusion that the transformations are not explicit in the works, not in a majority of situations. I turned eyes again to what was happening in the productions of doctoral programmes. Wjm Kok, the first PhDArts graduate, painted monochromes before and during the doctoral programme. His dissertation, synchronized with a practice placed in an already long career as an artist, approached issues related to series and difference, and invoked frequently Gilles Deleuze *Difference and repetition* (1968). After completing the doctoral studies, Kok kept painting monochromes (besides other things he already did before, like sound related projects), and one cannot tell that these more recent paintings are any better or worse than the older ones. They are still monochromes. What changed is that Wjm Kok has probably developed a further insight in his own practice and is more prepared to discuss shoulder to shoulder the public-ness of his monochromes and other work, not necessarily in the sometimes dubious sense of empowerment, but certainly in the sense of an acquired knowledge only possible through the process of research: “In research in and through artistic practice, the concepts of knowledge, meaning and sense are closely interwoven. The discursive, verbal component of the research is important in gaining insight into and examining this knowledge” (Wesseling, 2009, n/p), but nonetheless the works are not an illustration of this research process, neither is expectable that the research will be a mere description of the process of making art. The real transformation seems to be occurring at the level of the subject, rather on the actions performed. In the interview that I have conducted with Janneke Wesseling she refers that: “I think that on an individual level hopefully, and I believe it is so, that you can detect what happened during the whole PhD trajectory, and at the individual case, if you know the work, then you can say: ‘Ok, he or she is doing this now and this artist would have never been doing that, if he or she had not done this research.’ But that’s not the same thing as saying ‘We can recognize research based art as a specific genre in art’ because I don’t believe that. But I believe that doing this PhD research is such an enormous challenge and is so fundamental that if the student succeeds in completing it, that it’s a major transformation in one’s life. And not only on the level of art practice, but also personally”²⁴². The discursivity produced for the sake of research processes, which becomes a distinctive mark of artistic research when compared to ordinary art making, is also the risky factor of artistic research. It is, as a writing form and as a discussion event, which very much takes for itself an academic format, the target of most criticism of the skeptics, and, at the same time, the focus of tension of most of the contradictions attending the field. The production of discursivity is an identity feature and, simultaneously, it is the fragile aspect that allows that dematerialization

²⁴² Excerpt of the interview I conducted with Janneke Wesseling. The entire edited transcription is available in the “Annexes”.

is subtly replaced by the *new materialism* of discursivity: new vocabulary of knowledge society and high publishing rates.

Tom Holert refers to James Elkins in a way that seems to me pertinent here. In his *Art in the knowledge-based polis* (2010), Holert says that “[f]or Elkins, words like research and knowledge should be confined to administrative documents, and kept out of serious literature. In a manner most likely informed by science and technology studies and Bruno Latour, he argues instead that the focus should turn toward the specificity of charcoal, digital video, the cluttered look of studio classrooms (so different from science labs, and yet so similar), the intricacies of Photoshop . . . the chaos of the foundry, the heat of under-ventilated computer labs” (Holert, 2010, p.8). In Elkins’ mind is the hope that by embarking in more specific artistic discussions, the research outcomes would not be so easily seized and assessed by the scientific standards of disciplinary research. Their urge to set up criteria to legitimate quality in art is sometimes working inversely and influencing the way artistic research operates in order to achieve pre-determined results defined by such criteria, as says Tom Holert: “The urge among institutions of art and design education to rush the process of laying down validating and legitimating criteria to purportedly render intelligible the quality of art and design’s ‘new knowledge’ results in sometimes bizarre and ahistorical variations on the semantics of practice and research, knowledge and knowledge production” (2010).

For instance, the generalized interest of artists who engage in academic research in themes and procedures of neighboring areas may be regarded in line with developments in politics and society, but also as a way to meet criteria established for assessment. Criteria which, *per se*, are elaborated having in mind not the artistic processes, but the desired results of producing intelligible artistic work and valid knowledge in art – often disregarding artistic product at the expense of its commodification as knowledge.

Grayson Perry referred to this as the “international art English” reporting to a work of Alix Rule and David Levine: “... they put the entire contents of a website called e-flux where all of the art galleries from around the world put their press releases through it. They put it through a language analyser and they came up with a few observations about what they called international art English: ‘International art English rebukes ordinary English for its lack of nouns. Visual becomes visuality. Global becomes globality. Potential becomes potentiality. And experience of course becomes experienceability’” (Perry, 2013). Grayson’s call on “international art English” was intentional to point out the exclusion such education play nowadays in respect to the contemporary artist, who is not perceived as a “serious” artist if he does not master the knowledge-led vocabulary: “When I won the Turner Prize, one of the first questions they asked me was: ‘Grayson, are you a lovable character or are you a serious

artist?’ I said: ‘Can’t I be both?’ Because seriousness is a very important currency, it’s protected and how it’s protected is by language... Now this international art English began in the 1960s in art magazines and then it very quickly spread like wildfire because everybody wanted to be thought of as being very serious about the art, and so it spread to institutions, commercial galleries, even students’ dissertations, you’ll see it in today. Now the non-fluent in this kind of language might feel a bit uneducated and they might, they think you might need to understand this in order to pass judgment” (Perry, 2013).

This specific language fluency is therefore marking a turn in contemporary art making, and it is, at the same time, an identity trace of artistic research. As a conclusion, the impact of artistic research in contemporary art is ascertained in the presence and productivity (not in the *productivism* sense, though) of this discursive impetus. This is the reason why it does not invade the exhibition hall, being made present in the parallel programmes of biennials instead. For its binding with discursivity, the consequences for art of the developments in artistic research are therefore to be felt in the level of subjectivity of the artist, rather than explicitly in the artworks produced. Sure that discursivity is also a product, but what seems to me to be truly at stake in the process of going through artistic research is a transformation in the intellect and increased awareness of the subject, who gains further insight on the ongoing and finished productions, and applies a new way to be an artist and a new way to do art in the following creations.

Artistic research is much more an attitude than an area of study or specialized domain within art. The fact that there are positions to teach artistic research, and master courses of artistic research, as well as departments of artistic research, brings out some confusion to the matter, since one is led to ask “what are the issues studied in an artistic research oriented programme?” and “what are the specific outcomes of practice of artistic research and in which sense are they differing from the outcomes of an art studio master or doctoral programme?”, also in line with Dirk Hoyer’s inquiry towards Henk Slager in regards of the specificity of The Research Pavilion in the 56th Venice Biennale. The organization of exhibitions of artistic research seems to be condemned to a certain failure, or, at least, to a certain inconclusiveness, since that whereas they might be presented as a novelty, their result is not bringing anything really new or disruptive happening under the label of artistic research to art making. Maybe because there is nothing really new to present in such setting under the name of artistic research and we are simply witnessing a sort of a trend, as suggested Yota Ioannidou in our interview:

CA: Or, for example, this Venice Biennale, it will have a Research Pavilion, so it's a pavilion dedicated to artistic research.

YI: Who is doing that?

CA: Henk Slager, Jan Kaila and Anita Seppä, people from Northern Europe, but mostly it is for artists from Helsinki. They are having this Research Pavilion. That's also why I am asking this. Because it makes me think. At the Biennale that is...

YI: Maybe the... We still have to observe it to see which is the developing through time again, because maybe it's a trend. Because of an institution and expectations, they have to over promote that kind of...²⁴³

Furthermore, they seem to show that the attempt to make explicit the research underlying art making – as presumably is what these exhibitions are for –, is quite ironically detaching it from artistic practice. This is to say that the more one wants to talk about and to problematize the research component of the making of contemporary art, the more it seems that this component is torn from the initial, and perhaps more breathing and unaffected, context of art practice. The intention of putting the spotlight directed at artistic research in art world contexts seems to highlight its superficiality.

The severity of the situation is greater if the explicit research is not produced and presented in a way that completes and challenges the paired practice. The cases where it is merely descriptive but otherwise flat and uncritical and refraining problematization are the cases where discursivity is but the signal of the institutionalization performed by the neoliberal, capitalist society of control – and thus totally spoiling the chances for a truly transformative existence of artistic research.

The influence is to be perceived in more subtle levels. A demonstration of, as says Janneke Wesseling, can be perceived in the increasing importance given by art world places to discursivity of artists, in addition to their produced objects: "... But I definitely believe that there is a lot of influence of this research attitude in the art world and it is demonstrated by the policy that in The Netherlands, for example, that de Appel has and Witte de With. So, smaller places, and definitely Casco and BAK, who try to focus less on showing art as a collection or a presentation of art objects that are finished, but who are much more interested in engaging with the artists in a dialogue and then show the thinking process or the creative

²⁴³ Excerpt of the interview I conducted with Yota Ioannidou in her studio in Amsterdam. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

process, which does not necessarily result in a finished object that's on sale. So it is a sort of counter movement, I think, to the commodification of art."²⁴⁴.

The specificity of these artistic research outcomes are to be found in the transformations occurred in the subjectivity of the artist who, once familiar with artistic research, calls on research skills and public-ness concerns not so pressing beforehand. Artists have "... open access to this highest degree and also to this scholarly debate. It's not that that's the most important dialogue or debate, but it's very significant for politicians, for people that make the policy for museums and for cultural institutions that they know that artists are also able to partake in an academic discussion"²⁴⁵, says Janneke Wesseling, and, according to her student Yota Ioannidou, the academic experience and process of artistic research is, in the end, "... a good way to emancipate artists by having the need from curators or theoreticians to address their own issues. So you can really build the skills with which you can address the problems with. Address, you know, what you're doing. I think in a PhD this is very crucial. Because we talk about knowledge production and all of these discourses around the knowledge production. I think it's quite challenging how we can do it, what are we proposing through that process, as artists. This is interesting for me. It's very good that the creator to be able to develop some theory, instead of leaving to other people to do that"²⁴⁶.

²⁴⁴ Excerpt of the interview I conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited interview is available in the "Annexes".

²⁴⁵ Excerpt of the interview I conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited interview is available in the "Annexes".

²⁴⁶ Excerpt of the interview I conducted with Yota Ioannidou in her studio in Amsterdam. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

Due to a variety of reasons – novelty, educational system, politics, tradition – an agreement of what artistic research is, is yet to be found. Artistic research is therefore imbued of plurality. This plurality affects structural and identity parameters. As a result, the idea of a field of artistic research is meaning different things in different places at the same time. The risk is real that using the same terms, people are engaging in different conversations. Terminology is numerous and incidental, mirroring the plurality with wide range of terms whose rigorous meaning vary, even though all seek for a connection to that abstract idea of artistic research: arts-based research, practice-based research, artistic research, research-based art, practice-led research, art as research, research as art, research on art, research about art and research in and through art.

The generous number of possibilities very much embodies the hesitations and fragilities undermining the field. For the art's side, one could argue that the wide list is in accordance with the heterogeneity and plurality art always advocates; however, at a research context, such variations may only generate noise. It is the tricky relationship between the two apparently so distant realities, art world and research procedures, that has been setting their configuration and outputs so problematic. Nonetheless I believe that the precarious, and even lubricous status of artistic research is not irresolvable neither a dead end. Indeed, I think that the hypothetical definition of rigid parameters of the field could eventually stagnate it and make the transformative potential contained in the felt dynamics just disappear.

There are, nonetheless, a few basic principles that seem to be basing the field in the last decade in the work done in important artistic research clusters such as Helsinki and The Hague.

These, which in no way imply an extensive list of regulations, comprise the intimate connection to artistic processes as its very basilar commandment - Julius Elo²⁴⁷ states that: "The basis of artistic research is that there is knowledge that can be gained only through making art. Thus, my main research method is the production of performances, their perception and analysis" (Elo, 2015) - , which very much implies adhesion to a certain degree of the unexpected, the unknown, the crisis and transformation. Such aperture will obviously interfere in other aspects which are also part of the basic principles to which relate artistic

²⁴⁷ Julius Elo is a performer artist and doctoral student at TeaK and TAHTO group.

research, like the concerns with documentation, with presentation and with the public discussion of a work of artistic research – or public-ness.

This dissertation has approached these and other aspects with greater depth than this present lightly mentioning. I will now survey what I regard as the pain foci, or problematic spots of the disciplinary field of artistic research. They will be presented as a collection of conflicting points I identify mostly in the ontology, rather than in the epistemology of artistic research. According to the rest of this text, I am not interested in plunging into philosophical or irredeemable speculation in what concerns the outlining and the potentialities of this field. To a large extent, the several epistemological digressions seem to have been contributing to the general idea that artistic research is hopelessly impracticable, due to its loose identity, to its undefined procedures, heterogeneous outcomes and variable aims. At stake are very differing ideas of what the field is and what it should become. This sort of epistemological immersion is, or so seems to me, a problem itself. I think the potential of artistic research is locatable in the problematization of its ontology, rather than in its epistemology. The understanding of what the field is involves looking at the structures of power and governance into which it is and wants to be settled down. In this sense, and after realizing and openly assuming the perverted circumstances of a neoliberal and knowledge society of control for the emergence of the field, the next step is not to eradicate the field but to look into the potentialities that only arise after the face to face with this problematic environment and (only) apparent dead end. At stake is very clearly the dynamics of power-knowledge relationships.

The following fragilities and points of disagreement are sometimes and by some regarded as obstructions at one time, and dynamic diversities at the other.

The surveyed issues aroused from immediate empiric realizations resulting from the day-to-day conviviality in artistic research centres such as KuvA and KABK, and also derive from the consultation of the vast literature published in the field of artistic research – not without a huge sense of criticality towards this kind of sources.

The aim of these pain foci is not merely troubleshooting. Instead, it is about finding sensitive spots in the disciplinary field, those which simultaneously contribute to the formation of its identity, its productivity and its lethargy. Some of these tensional knots acquire their dynamics from a paradoxical circumstance in which they seem founded on. I wanted to preserve this paradoxical outlining since it allows to simultaneously stress the productive effects triggered by the tensional dynamics, as well as the sometimes controversial, weakening and confusing aspects comprised in the same knots. This idea of paradox very much illustrates the contradictory nature that very often, for the time being, artistic research is imbued with. My

point of view, however, is that the surveyed contradiction does not necessarily come as a handicap, as most criticism seems to advocate.

However, the way some of these controversial aspects persist is largely contributing to an unreliable image of it as a disciplinary field, fostering opponents and skeptics' travestied image of criticism. In order to maintain artistic research as an unacceptable field of knowledge, its opponents fabricate images to direct their most veracious critique or convicted disapproval at. Strategies of opposition also include the refusal dialogue and indifference, while the arguments of disapproval lay majorly in some or several aspects touched upon in this list of sample of pain foci. Like the rest of this dissertation, the tensional knots are intimately connected.

The set of all these knots will hopefully form a global image of artistic research by claiming attention not to the hypothetical benefits it could provide, but to the problematic features that shape its current state of affairs. These pain foci are summing up few important aspects that were deepened previously in the text, they are bridging to the endnotes.

Plurality! Plural identity means plurality of outcomes, plurality of approaches in public presentations and plurality of appreciations

In the examination of "research actions", "art actions", and their position in the fields of research and art, [Turkka] Keinonen presents the following eight possible articulations of the research/art relationship: 1) Research can interpret art and 2) art can interpret research. 3) Art can be transplanted into a research context, just as 4) research can be transplanted into an art context. 5) Art can contribute to research and 6) research can contribute to art. 7) Research and art practice can remain parallel activities, even if they share a common denominator. 8) It is also possible for the art and research actions to overlap. (Elo, 2009, pp. 20-21)

For the time being a multitude of approaches gives rise to a multitude of appreciations of the field of artistic research. My understanding is that the appreciation of the field of artistic research is highly conditioned by the way it is publicly presented. Once again the importance of public discussion is underlined.

The perspective highlighted by the presenter – choose among the speaker, the writer, the artist, the scholar, the student - will unavoidably influence the reception of the topic. The sources used, and the stressed aspects will reveal the positioning of the speakers towards the

field they're approaching, and so anchor their vision of what artistic research is in a known ground. Artistic research, largely owing to its reported novelty and evident uncertainty, is subject to be explored and presented in the perspectives of human sciences, artistic practice, writing techniques, cultural studies, art history, economy, politics, academic legislation, history of education and universities, arts education, politics, etc. The more or less sympathy for any of these areas will condition the appreciation and the adopted posture towards artistic research, ranging from open and interested to tolerant, indifferent or refusing attitudes. Some of these possible starting points are more informed of principles matching my aforementioned basic principles of artistic research, while others simply disregard those fundamental aspects and, therefore, offer a twisted image of what artistic research is and can be.

In a book titled *Art and Research – Can artists be researchers?* published by the University of Applied Arts of Vienna, a quote of the Development Plan of 2009-2012 of University of Music and Performing Arts of Graz (KUG), refers to artistic research as follows:

The development and expansion of the arts (EEK) [EEK, Austrian acronym for “development and expansion of the arts”, is the equivalent term for artistic research in Austria] in universities contributes to society's gain in knowledge through a range of artistic methods and has a central position in the work of our university. EEK is a reciprocal exchange between artistic work and reflection upon it, and is carried out in close association with academic research and its application. The field of academic study and scholarship have therefore been developed very broadly at the KUG, even in international comparison. In artistic courses of study, the engagement with academic study and scholarship makes a significant contribution to the development of forward-looking, independent artistic personalities. In the field of science and scholarship, the integration of live artistic practice brings to the research results a continuous process of updating and an increase of applicability. The symbiosis between art and science raises the quality of both fields at the KUG. (as quoted in Schulz & Höldrich, 2011, pp. 225-226).

A reader is here confronted with a view of artistic research that emphasizes the social benefit resulting from the field's activity. KUG also seems concerned with the applicability of academic research, associating the development of the field to the affirmation of the university in an international sphere.

A public not entirely clear on the subject could then be led to believe that the goals of artistic research include any kind of betterment of society, be it from the perspective of human relations or the improvement of economy. However, that is hardly part of artistic research interests. Its activity is so bonded with the artistic territory that their aims are quite overlapped. And since art openly shows failure and error as valid topics for art practice, artistic research could also not tie itself to the empowerment of citizens or the common good. Not in these terms, at least. Artistic research, as well as art, does not deal with the good and the bad, the positive and the negative, the improvement and the impairment, which makes the repertory of interests absent of humanist ventures. They may exist, but only collaterally or as extensions of the main pathway. The subjectivity of the artist-researcher highlighted by KUG, as someone who is “forward-looking”, serves better political and economic interests of neoliberalism, which can arguably contribute to a “society’s gain”, rather than the uncommitted artist who is much more concerned with the artistic discourse than with the social impact of the work.

In the same book, *Art and Research – Can artists be researchers?*, Sandra Kemp talks glowingly about the development of the research environment at the Royal College of Art in London. According to her, the Royal College of Art (RCA) “has played a key role – nationally and internationally – in the development of research-based education within the disciplines of the arts and design” (2011, p. 161). Very promising, at least until the perspective and touchstones are unveiled in excerpts such as the following: “Staff and students alike are key players in the creative and cultural industries – areas that are important to the social and economic success of the UK as a whole and to London in particular” (p. 161). Kemp’s remark is in the trail of KUG’s, only more extreme. The political inventions that are the “creative and cultural industries” are only part of a neoliberal strategy to impel economy, with nothing artistic about them. According to Robert Hewison’s lecture “Creating the Creative Industries: the British experience and its challenges” in the seminar *Culture 3.0: presuming the art academy* (Lectorate Art Theory & Practice, 2015), held at the KABK on April 2015 and organized by the research group Lectorate Art Theory & Practice headed by Janneke Wesseling, all sorts of professionals are working in the so-called creative industries, except experimental and independent artists who were supposed to be at the centre of these industries yet remain at the margins. Creative industries are thus something that art cannot cope with.

One of the slides of Hewison’s presentation was showing the kinds of creative industries, and their degree of creativity, operating in the UK in 2014. At the seventh position, out of nine, there is “Publishing”. It comes after advertising, architecture, crafts, any type of design, video, radio, photography, IT, software and computer services, and just before museums, music,

performing and visual arts. I suppose the order of the artistry of creative industries already tells a lot about their circumscription. “Publishing” is worth a remark. It is this “creative industry” at the hands of university’s bureaucracy, corporations and profit-making that risks turning – or that has been turning *de facto* – artistic research into an industry of publishing, either in university presses, in publishing houses or in conference proceedings. Any good excuse for publishing is carried out, and although the “Publishing” creative industry at Robert Hewison’s slide is *a priori* more related to artists’ books, catalogues and design experiments, it also constitutes a good chance to introduce the industrial *productivism* into which has been partly immersed artistic research. The situation is also due to classification entities and funding opportunities using publishing outputs to assess artistic research performance more in the terms of quantity rather than focusing on quality.

It is an undeniable fact that an industry of publishing – as a creative industry or not – is working and in full force. What this doesn’t mean is that artistic research is that industry, or that each other intents coincide all the way. An unwarned, a blurred and an enlightened view on these issues of artistic research relating to creative industries and publishing engines will render different states of conscious and diverging opinions after the quoted remark by Sandra Kemp or other examples.

She goes on about the Royal College of Art: “The course [the Research Methods Course, part of all research degrees of RCA] offers a range of workshops, seminars and mentoring services to enhance and develop both the subject-specific and transferable and careers skills of our diverse postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers” (2011, pp.162-163); or “In 2001, as part of a formal research assessment of research from around 50,000 researchers at UK universities, conducted jointly by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland, the RCA was awarded the highest score, 5, for art and design” (2011, p.161). These fragments attest that the success of research at the RCA is being evaluated by entities such as a department for employment, and so, logically, the interests of “creative and cultural industries” are accounted and tags like “career skills”, transferability, applicability and sustainability are for sure of great importance.

Nevertheless, if one undertakes a deeper search of the research being done at the College, a lot more rather than applied-research, or market driven inquiry, is to be found. A search from a different perspective show that within the School of Fine Arts are currently being developed studies on humor (*Humour in Contemporary Art: Reflections on Its Use and Implications*, by Norma Thallon), on shock (*Culturally Determined Shock in Contemporary Photography*, by Tanja Verlak), on the viewer (*‘n-scale’: the work of art*, by Brigid McLeer) and on the

monochrome (*Inscription, Labour and Trace in Contemporary Painting*, by Miguel Mathus²⁴⁸), among others. And they are not being approached from the perspective of the market, like reverting shock and humor in art as something profitable for industries, but from artistic perspectives. After the shiny introduction of Sara Kemp, one could hardly guess such research endeavors would also find space within the same institution. So, once again, the ways institutions present themselves and speakers introduce artistic research are effectively decisive in the image received by the public. What this finally encloses is that general ideas of artistic research might be informed by partial acknowledgement and so not providing neither being sustained in thoroughgoing perceptions of the field. This is true for every field at the eyes of non-experts, yet it aggravates in a field which is still in process of formation and that was set up before actually setting up itself.

The portrayal depicted by Sandra Kemp contrasts with, for instance, the programme presentation of the Academy of Fine Arts of Vienna:

The PhD in Practice program provides a concept of arts-based research that is built upon critical epistemologies, as they have been developed in the context of feminist, queer, postcolonial, ecological, postmarxist and other political and emancipatory projects. Inspired by these struggles, the PhD in Practice program approaches arts-based research as a space for the negotiation of social, political, cultural and economic conflicts. It refers to a history of research in the arts field, which has been developed in dialog with an array of different fields, including academia, activism, high art as much as pop and subculture. It thus privileges cultural productions, which are concerned with a critique of social hierarchies and exclusions, and it is interested in the development of heterotopic visions. By engaging with these trajectories, the conditions and foundations of knowledge production in the arts field become itself a subject-matter of basic research²⁴⁹.

Instead of emphasizing cultural industries and applicability, the Austrian programme is concerned with “critical epistemologies”, “cultural productions”, “critique of social hierarchies and exclusions” and “heterotopic visions”. PhD in Practice’s arts-based research procedures implies concerns with a “history of research in the arts field”, as well as with “the conditions and foundations of knowledge production in the arts field”. These topics are not targeted

²⁴⁸ More information at <http://www.rca.ac.uk/research-innovation/research/current-research/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

²⁴⁹ Retrieved from: <http://blogs.akbild.ac.at/phdinpractice/>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

explicitly in the sense that the syllabus does not favor theoretical digressions on epistemology or in the history of artistic research. It seems this might be a pivotal decision to prevent the programme becoming trapped in research about artistic research, a situation that would awry privilege speculative thought and contextual studies over artistic practice. At the same time, in Vienna they do not completely discard the importance of that speculative and cultural studies conscience in their PhD students, proposing that such positioning would come along with the main activities proposed on the syllabus. This programme of the Academy of Fine Arts of Vienna makes an important note on the direction of artistic research doctoral programmes, and in a way it is in accordance with something that could be foretold at the PhD environment of KuvA. In Helsinki the students say that although they are enrolled in an artistic research programme, that doesn't mean they have talk about artistic research all the time. As long as they are consciously doing artistic research they are also positioning themselves in relation to history and conditions of knowledge production.

It is very unlikely that this programme of Vienna would get a 5 as did the programme at the RCA. But does it mean it is a less interesting programme for artists? I have met a few artists who have considered the PhD in Practice of Academy of Fine Arts of Vienna while thinking over to which programme enroll. For instance, André Alves was still in Portugal and considering Vienna, before he ended up admitted to the programme at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki (KuvA). In The Hague, Ato Malinda, who has started her doctoral studies this year, told she was first undecided between the PhDArts programme and the one of the Academy of Fine Arts of Vienna. She eventually opted for the first, at the interesting argument that her guessing impression is that PhDArts – Doctoral Programme in Visual Art and Design is generally more disciplined than Vienna's programme. This makes sense to her since she regards herself as an "academic artist"²⁵⁰.

However this disciplined feeling isn't standing out at first sight in PhDArts self-presentation. Reading on their positioning over artistic research, it follows that the programme is very experimental and receptive to individual explorations:

This type of research does not have a predetermined methodology. It has an open character, which is determined by the desire to reflect one's art or design practice, in collaboration with others.... In some cases the research has become the art work or design itself; matter and medium function as the instruments in the research or "thinking process"... Inventing a language which

²⁵⁰ Ato Malinda quoted from the interview I conducted with her. The entire edited transcription is in the "Annexes".

enables the researcher to communicate with others and which enables the evaluation of the research is as important as devising a viable research methodology²⁵¹.

Further insight has revealed that the disciplined side of PhDArts is embodied in the handbook of the programme and in a couple of other official documents produced by the board of the course. The handbook is a document of 27 pages, focusing on an amount of structural aspects and aiming “to guide students through the necessary processes and regulations”. Although announcing a tailored study, the document also sets out the joint curriculum students participate in. Its pages include information on Interim Evaluation (Qualifying Hurdle) and Annual Progress Evaluations – each with corresponding regulation on the submissions required, from the number of words of a portfolio of writing to the artistic part and oral presentation. It is stressed that to succeed in the first year evaluation, the student has to complete the Individual Writing Project. This writing project is further regulated in another dedicated document which informs that the current state of the individual research should be the starting point of an essay consisting of 3,500 to 5,000 words. Also exists a prepared standard review form for the evaluation of the writing project, which is attentive on the structure of the essay, the correct use of references, footnotes, bibliographical data and citations, the mastery of idiomatic language, the use of a catchy title, the clear formulation of the problem, logical conclusion and according PhD standards profound argumentation, the exhibition of the student’s artistic practice and the evidence of the acquaintance of existing literature to the accorded topic.

Writing is playing a very important role in the doctoral programme. The solicitude towards text is not so explicit in the info available at the website. Nevertheless it comes as a necessary part. That is not surprising, and actually it is quite expectable in a PhD level, even more if one considers the programme’s other remarks on the necessity of the researcher to dialogue with the community. And, nevertheless, this type of regulation is not the kind that leads the field to crystallization, but that helps framing it in order to strengthen the production and the achievements. I’d say it’s the kind of regulation that is needed to produce knowledge out of love, calling on a remark by Leonardo da Vinci that Pasi Lyytikäinen²⁵² is very fond of: “Those who are in love with practice without knowledge are like the sailor who gets into a ship without rudder or compass and who never can be certain whether he is going” (2015, p. 7).

²⁵¹ Retrieved from: <http://www.phdarts.eu/PhDArts/About>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

²⁵² Composer and doctoral student at Sibelius Academy and TAHTO group.

Or, like beautifully says Tero Nauha²⁵³: “In practice I know something, but it is not instantly useful as knowledge, if ever. Of course, in practice there is knowledge as well, being the production of knowledge, but the knowing is without a territory or a base. The knowing in practice has no reason whatsoever. Knowing is the practice of heretics, and not the knowledge of revolutionaries” (2015, p. 8).

And because there is no love without pain, Sirkka Kosonen²⁵⁴ is poignant in reporting that “When I started my doctoral studies, I knew what improvisation was. I had strong views about improvisation and the use of human voice... Now in the last stage of my study I feel that new knowledge creates new pain. I cannot define what free improvisation is”. And she completes with: “I have not got a single paid gig as a free improviser, but quite a few as an accordion player”, and “Artistic research has made me painfully aware of my rehearsing habits and my time management for both work and leisure. I get a bad conscience when reading something else than literature from my research area, when I play old dance music and folk music on the accordion and the kantele and when I work with my choir. However, these all are important parts of my musicianship” (2015, p. 4).

The initial quote of Mika Elo I used to introduce this “Plurality!” section, where he refers to articulations made by Turkka Keinonen, offers an alternative perspective of artistic research, less personal and less institutionalized, and focusing mainly in the possible relations between what it means the artistic and what it means the research in artistic research, and how these two types of actions relate to each other. “Although Keinonen’s analysis is illuminating”, says Elo, “it remains schematic and fails to reveal how the identity of both parties is at stake in the dialogical relationship between art and research” (Elo, 2009, p.21).

Florian Dombois’ insight is also schematic and aims at clarity: “1. ‘Art as research’ presupposes an epistemic interest. 2. The epistemic interest is clearly stated. 3. Knowledge is formulated within the respective art form. 4. A grouping according to subjects complements the classification by form of representation. 5. Research is done by many people, not only one person. 6. The evaluation of the results of research is carried out by experts. 7. The results are made accessible to the general public via publication. 8. Quality criteria are agreed upon for the discussion of research results. 9. ‘Art as Research’ takes into account the ‘State of the Art’. 10. ‘Art as Research’ can take up the solutions scientific research offers and bat them back as questions” (Dombois, 2006). Dombois’ approach seems to point to the institutional framing once also advocated by Esa Kirkkopelto. In the list made by the German author, elements such as the reference to “evaluation” made by “experts”, the urgent “publication” of results,

²⁵³ Performer artist and doctoral student at TeaK and TAHTO group.

²⁵⁴ Musician and doctoral student of Sibelius Academy and TAHTO group.

“quality criteria” and “state of the art”, are symptomatic of the presence of the academia as the environment for setting up his idea of “art as research” (that I take here as a synonym of artistic research). Esa Kirkkopelto’s view on the field of artistic research has been largely exposed and resorted to in this dissertation. He has made a precious remark by nailing a distinction between artistic field and artistic research: the latter occurs only when it institutes something, that is, artistic research intends to deploy what turns away from autonomy and originality just to engage into public appropriation. This contains a sense of public utility (that is what an institute/institution is about), the axis which sets the distinction between art and artistic research. Artists’ experienced difficulties when enrolled in doctoral programmes accrue from this difference insufficiently highlighted. This “utility” is not, however, by any means connected to bettering intents, or with profit making; the “public utility” contained in Kirkkopelto’s idea of “instituting” (2011) is staging the possibility of appropriation that such endeavor provides once it becomes public: published, presented, distributed. Then it can also become utile.

From an endless plurality of possibilities to define and approach the field and the very abstract idea of artistic research, the tautological ones seem to be the less ambiguous and therefore the most successful. Kiril Kozlovsky²⁵⁵ is straightforward: “Artistic research is an activity conducted by a person that could be seen as artistic researcher” (2015, p. 5).

The important point here is to show once more that plurality is part of the current state of being of artistic research, and not every time as a purposed option. The fact that the conceptions of artistic research are so varied is not always stemming from safeguarding diversity in a pluralistic and heterogeneous world. More often they result from the uncertainty that attends every curricular approach to the field, which takes into account the necessity of preserving artistic requirements, of fitting academic expectations, of meeting funding criteria and of still being attractive for artists to enroll. As a result, and because for the moment to answer all these demands at once still seems conflicting, the ways to publicly present and describe what goes on in artistic research programmes are balancing in their general aspects and also in their landmarks, and are still experimental to a large extent.

The absence of a community of artist researchers

Speaking of her research trajectory, Elina Lifländer²⁵⁶ confesses that: “It requires a lot of time, energy, funding and motivation to accomplish one’s own research process. This brought up the dilemma of relevancy: Who else really cares about this particular research than my own field

²⁵⁵ Kiril Kozlovsky is a pianist and doctoral student at Sibelius Academy and TAHO group.

²⁵⁶ Elina Lifländer is a scenographer and doctoral student of Aalto University and TAHO group.

of contemporary performance designers and spatial artists? This idea has haunted me from time to time during the research process” (2015, n/p).

In TAhTO’s seminar I had attended in January 2015 I have heard of similar concerns relating to ‘who is my reader?’ and ‘who really is going to read my dissertation besides my mum?’. No one can tell. I also share this preoccupation, not necessarily in relation to my own work, but to what is being produced at doctoral level by artists: who are they writing to? To themselves? To anyone else? And what happens after their graduation? I have the feeling that most of the work developed in these contexts goes unnoticed, either for a kind of semantic invisibility – it matters most to know that a person holds a PhD or a DFA, rather than what it is about -, or due to inaccessibility: when these works do not get published, printed or online, they are likely condemned to perish in dust at some drawer in the authors private studio or in libraries which artists do not have the habit to visit. Since I’ve developed a great part of my own thoughts on the subject of artistic research through reading doctoral works and collecting testimonies from doctoral students and staff, I think that resides an amount of unexplored interest and “utility” in the dissemination of these works. A quite radical yet effective step could be the inclusion in the bibliography of artistic research programmes some of the scattered dissertations concluded in close themes of those being addressed in such programmes or individual research projects. The access to such raw material could eventually prove more interesting and useful than the contact with totally mediated (sometimes alienated) opinions on the field present in much anthologies. Ultimately, it is the work of these students and their doctoral researches that have the strongest potential of sharpening the field.

Even at earlier stages, the discussion – and not just the dissemination – of the work developed in the duration of these programmes is fundamental for a more critical and insightful process. PhDArts’ staff is very keen on the necessity of the artist to publicly discuss the produced work, and that does not go only with the public defense, which is a standardized climax in most, if not all, doctoral programmes:

The artist/designer-as-researcher distinguishes himself from other artists/designers by taking it upon himself to make statements about his thinking process and the production of work. The researcher allows others to participate in this research process, entering into a discussion with others and opening himself up to critique. The researcher seeks the discussion in the public domain. Without public discussion and the exchange with peers the research lacks its reason for existence. When this exchange takes place in an academic context, within the framework of research for a PhD as is the case

with PhDArts, certain conditions apply. For example, the research needs to yield fresh insights, not merely into one's personal work but into art or design in the broader sense as well²⁵⁷.

At PhDArts the public discussion embraces the artist researcher duty to be open to peers', supervisors' and teaching staff's criticism, to contextualize the work through a careful state of the art, and to outcome interesting results to a broader community. That is a community of artist researchers which, for the moment, is almost inexistent.

The handbook for doctoral students of PhDArts informs that the student is allocated a supervising team in the beginning of the studies, and the team comprises a directing supervisor, who is a professor at Leiden University Academy of Creative and Performing Arts, and additionally two or three specialists. The directing supervisor is the responsible for overseeing the progress of the research project and the other members of the team are responsible for the artistic and academic supervision respectively. Supervising teams consist of staff members preferably available from the partner institutions, although external specialists are also accepted if necessary. An attentive look at the body of supervisors of PhDArts reveals high quality as a standard. In addition to this observation, and relying on the data available on the website, the large majority of the supervisors are not practicing artists. That does not necessarily mean that they are not acquainted with these practices, or that their careers are not established within the art world as curators, collectors or critics. What stands out is that only very few of the supervisors are active artists: only around 27% are practicing artists and designers²⁵⁸. This sample of practicing artists and designers includes a majority of positions in higher education institutions, which means artists who are teaching and lecturing in academies while practicing. Totally independent artists without bonds to arts education are hard to find. Nevertheless this does not even seem to be a necessary condition to proceed in interesting ways in artistic research, although it possibly is object of discussion. The facts are that if a supervisor is and has been all his or her life removed from institutional teaching and researching on arts, then the supervising might lack some of those institutional inputs and knowledge of restraints, but also of methodologies, forms of presentation and scholar writing. On the other hand it arguably might be of positive effect to disregard these constraints until some point, and given that everything is possible in art, then make everything possible in artistic research as well. The separation of academic and artistic supervision in PhDArts might

²⁵⁷ Retrieved from: <http://www.phdarts.eu/PhDArts/About>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

²⁵⁸ From 25 names, only 7 are presenting themselves in the introductory texts as artists. Profiles checked at <http://www.phdarts.eu/Supervisors>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

be an attempt to offset the individual propensities of supervisors. It is also of great importance to consider that eligibility to be a supervisor might presuppose an academic valid degree that totally independent artists often do not have. In Portugal, in particular in the Faculty of Fine Arts of University of Porto, some supervision is done only unofficially exactly due to the lack of academic requirements on the side of students' chosen supervisors. Portuguese law demands PhD awarded supervisors which, in the field of the arts, is not so easy to find - although this is a lately changing landscape. In PhDArts this problem seems to be overcome with the figure of the directing supervisor who, being a professor at Leiden University, allows for other less schooled supervising team members. It is about creating a formal frame that makes what would be the marginal unofficial supervision in Portugal into a regular procedure in The Netherlands.

The problem might be when the supervising in artistic research is undertaken by non-artists. It is more or less generally accepted that artistic research has in the bigger part to do with art making, which may become a spoiled intention from the moment a supervising team lacks this practicability. For as much as someone has worked as curator in a museum or gallery, that person is not perceptive of the idiosyncrasies of practicing arts, of the subject-process-object relations, and how a logical conclusion can be an open-ended reflection of unusual *media*. This is also the reason that many of the current doctoral programmes in art, PhDArts included, are profiling prospective students as well established practicing artists. To think about art is a different thing of doing art.

A common focus of criticism lays precisely on the profile of the subjects consuming artistic research. The organization of the seminar *Conversations on Artistic Research* in November 2014 in Porto, in which I took part, was criticized by staff members of the Faculty in the pith of its motivations. The argument of criticism was that artistic research is pointless to artists (I think "artists-artists" were the sort that was meant), and that the questions treated by the field concern only a small minority of individuals who is not even taking part in the art world. As the main organizer of the seminar I had to argue against it, but at the same time I am forced to recognize that such criticism is a direct consequence of the ineffectual and insignificant role artistic research community is playing in contexts where modernist reminiscences are still regnant in art practice. Also in countries where degrees in artistic research are still regarded as novelty and exceptional situations, the influence of artistic research in the artistic field will be felt later in time when compared to pioneering contexts such as the Nordic countries, the UK, Austria and the Netherlands. Independently of the results achieved, the Research Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale certainly proves that speaking of artistic research in countries such as

the Netherlands and Finland has an impact way distinct of that felt in a country like Portugal, where discussion even is slow to happen.

In terms of an audience, of course Northern countries and Continental Europe have raised more consistently an artistic research community in close links to art world initiatives, even though a lot of work is ahead to make this relationship more positively conflictual than tiresome.

Who is Sandra Kemp, the author of the previously cited excerpts about the research environment of Royal College of Art London? She founded the Research Department at the Royal College of Art in London and “as Research Director she nurtured interdisciplinary and industry-related research and its commercial exploitation in areas including art and design, material science and computer science. She is an experienced leader of academic, public and corporate programmes”²⁵⁹. Sandra Kemp “led the RCA in its international research development, building partnerships in Europe, the USA and South East Asia. In the UK she has contributed to many of the latest policy developments in higher arts education, in part through her membership of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and through her involvement as a panel member in the recent UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)”²⁶⁰. She has a background in English literature and is also a curator. Although she has an impressive career as a scholar, with eighteen published books and many articles on visual culture, literary theory and fiction, Kemp’s expertise is not coming from artistic practice. She is a scholar, and a very respected one. Professor Sandra Kemp’s remarks on the topic of artistic research are nonetheless understandably focusing on different concerns than those held by practicing artists. Now makes sense her discourse is neglecting art’s idiosyncrasies and her goals are removed from the artistic field.

And who are Georg Schulz and Robert Höldrich, who authored the chapter about the University of Music and Performing Arts of Graz - KUG? Georg Schulz has a degree in chemistry and a doctorate in science. He has musical education as accordionist and an international concert career. Robert Höldrich studied electric engineering, composition and holds a PhD in applied mathematics, being currently vice principal of Arts and Science at KUG. He has published about sound rendering and synthesis, digital signal processing, psychoacoustics and media philosophy. Artistic careers of both Schulz and Höldrich blend with the history of KUG, where they occupy and occupied positions as rector and vice-rectors in the institution. Their technocratic selves seem to be far more evident than the artistic concerns in the text produced. The risk is what describes the rector of University of the Arts of Helsinki, Tiina

²⁵⁹ Retrieved from <https://uk.linkedin.com/pub/sandra-kemp/33/5ab/643>. Last access on: 30.06.2015.

²⁶⁰ Retrieved from http://www.wissenschaftsrat.ac.at/news/Kemp_Lebenslauf.pdf. Last access on: 30.06.2015.

Rosenberg, in an interview with Dirk Hoyer: “As I am in an official position I am not allowed to have any opinions. This is what people tell me. The rectors in Finland never spoke up and they never had any opposing ideas. Well they certainly do not have the ideas that I do have. But now I am the rector and I have these ideas. For how long the ideas will last and for how long the rectorship will last, we will see. But we should believe in the utopian potential of our students... But, if I am self critical, perhaps I can embody some kind of radicalism because I can afford it. I can be radical chic because I can afford it. You have to be privileged today to be able to speak up. And our professors and other people at the university are privileged and they should do something about the world”²⁶¹.

A closer look to the board of the doctoral studies at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts (KuvA) shows that the programme is also not being ruled by what I previously called independent artists. The personalities in charge of it are mostly active in the domains ‘about art’, that is, are theory, aesthetics, politics and visual culture, according to the profiles of Mika Elo, Anita Seppä and Maija Timonen²⁶². Except for Maija Timonen, who is an artist filmmaker actively working on moving image, yet also actively writing critical texts about artists, film and fiction, both Mika Elo and Anita Seppä have careers in the domains of theory and studies about art. Mika Elo, recently appointed director of the doctoral programme of artistic research of the University of the Arts Helsinki Faculty of Fine Arts, “is renowned for his diverse expertise in artistic research, visual culture and media theory. His research examines the interfaces of different art forms, philosophy and media theory, the epistemology of artistic research, corporeality and photographic theory”. He is part of editorial boards on his fields of expertise and has been coordinating projects and curating exhibitions. Elo has studied medicine, philosophy, cultural studies, aesthetics and photography and, in addition to research, he is also a practicing artist. However his most emphatic activity is placed at the side of his reflective skills on works of art. With a background in philosophical aesthetics, art education, literature studies and art history, Anita Seppä “is known as a specialist of art theory and visual arts whose research interests cover a broad range of issues, such as the globalization and the arts, the borderlines of aesthetics, ethics and politics, art history, visual culture studies, methodology of the art research and aesthetic theory”. She is currently a visiting professor in University of the Arts Helsinki, and has occupied a range of academic positions in different institutions in Finland. In contrast, the doctoral students are all practicing and well-established artists, they are “experts in their own field, artists whose work is characterised by a research-

²⁶¹ Retrieved from: <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/blogs/research-pavilion/privatized-hope-dissent-and-emotion>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

²⁶² Retrieved from: <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/kuva>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

oriented approach”²⁶³. Just like in PhDArts – Doctoral Programme in Visual Art and Design of The Hague, where in addition to a body of supervisors prominently made up of theoreticians, the staff comprises two scholars (Frans de Ruiter and Janneke Wesseling), also in Helsinki a board of mostly thinkers of art is in charge of the doctoral education of artists. In Vienna the board is composed of Annette Baldauf, who is a sociologist frequently collaborating with artists and with a vast work that touches the artistic domain and the cross of art and politics, and Renate Lorenz, an artist and “cultural scientist”, working “at the intersection of visual culture, theory and politics” with internationally exhibited work and published materials²⁶⁴. There are a few milestone authors of artistic research, so considered for the influence of their publications, the reputation of the study programmes they take part or head, and the degree of networking they are involved in. Names like Henk Borgdorff, Mick Wilson, Michael Schwab, Mika Hannula, James Elkins, Janneke Wesseling, Graeme Sullivan, Dieter Lesage, Juha Varto, Florian Dombois, Henk Slager, Annette Arlander and Jan Kaila are composing an elegant panel of artistic research thinkers who, however, are not all cumulatively artist researchers. Who from these have education in art and/or maintain an active artistic career, letting it mutually influence their research activities? Mick Wilson certainly does. With a heading position in Valand Academy in Sweden, Mick Wilson has been previously Dean in GradCAM in Ireland and widely involved in networks, conferences and publications of renown in artistic research. In parallel, and very often overlapping with his presentations and contributions to the field, Wilson develops a career as visual artist. He has often been included in some of the exhibition events that also reinforce the presence of artistic research in the art world, namely the 9th Taipei Biennial and the 2013 Istanbul Biennial. Also both Annette Arlander and Florian Dombois put forth artistic careers in combination with theoretical production. I think that it is the fact that Arlander had already a long career as a performance artist when she decided to engage in artistic research that adds to the pioneering spirit of Finnish artistic research a special flavour.

Additionally, contributors like Anton Vidokle, Hito Steyerl, Liam Gillick, Jan Verwoert, Irit Rogoff, Ute Meta Bauer or Dora Garcia hold fundamental positions in the outlining of the field of artistic research, although in an indirect way given they do not always address directly the topic of the disciplinary field. Some of them might be, however, what could be regarded as the yearned prototype of the artist-researcher - once again, like they say in Helsinki, to do artistic research one does not have to be always talking about artistic research.

²⁶³ Retrieved from <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/doctoral-education/academy-of-fine-arts>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

²⁶⁴ Retrieved from <http://blogs.akbild.ac.at/phdinpractice/staff-and-participants/staff/>. Last access on: 09.04.2015.

It should be expectedly interesting to glimpse who are the authorities behind networks like EARN – European Artistic Research Network, ELIA – European League of Institutes of the Arts and SAR – Society for Artistic Research, the giants structuring relationships among the headquarters of artistic research and other poles of activity in an international geography. I've done that in the third chapter "Establishing", for Society for Artistic Research, where I verified that the executive board members of SAR are majorly scholar "The executive board members, elected in May 2015, are of clear scholar and institutional propensities, comprising teachers, consultants, advisors and theory and institutionally led personas, and except for Anya Lewin and Leena Rouhiainen, no other has artistic background can be perceived. In ELIA this technocratic propensity is even more highlighted through the staff qualifications.

In general it is detectable that a good part of the professoriate of doctoral courses in artistic research is composed of non-artists or of artists with an expressive contribution to the associated fields of art theory – sometimes they are more influent in these artistic branches than in the artistic area they were initially trained in. Anton Vidokle, one of the founders of e-flux in 2008, is widely known more for his curating and theoretical activities, mostly related to the potential brought by e-flux's platform and journal, than for his artistic practice. Yet he makes a point of being identified as an artist in the first place: "Anton Vidokle is an artist who captures the attention of 70,000 people each day through e-flux, as well as unitednationsplaza, Martha Rosler Library, and other traveling projects. Yet comparatively few members of this audience consider him an artist, despite the fact that he has publicly identified himself as such for over a decade and has exhibited in museums and galleries across the world" (Vidokle, 2009)²⁶⁵.

There is no proven correlation between being a scholar and a mediocre artist at the same time. The presence of scholars in the pedagogic boards of artistic research doctoral programmes does not inform they have become scholars after failing an artistic career. Some have not even really tried to check over. Be that as it is I will call anyone with an artistic training an artist, and on an artist actively producing and exhibiting I will put the name practicing artist. Notwithstanding it is hard to believe to some modernist spirited artists – who are definitely practicing artists -, it may happen that an artist finds in the academy a challenging territory for struggles and resistance; it may happen that language plays an interesting role as a preferable *medium* in such endeavors. And of course it can perchance mean they are better scholars, or better theoreticians, or better writers than they are

²⁶⁵ Fragment of the text on the back cover of *Produce, Distribute, Discuss, Repeat* (2009), by Anton Vidokle. New York: Lukas & Sternberg. It can be accessed here: <http://www.sternberg-press.com/index.php?pagelId=1258&bookId=153&l=en>. Last access on 30.06.2015.

marketable artists. So the point here is that to be a scholar is not always a second choice, contrary to common belief. Personally I haven't met a single case of an artist who, due to the evidence of an unsuccessful artistic career, has opted to become a scholar instead. In fact, artistic research is so intimately related to artistic processes and to the subjectivity – even though a dynamic and varying subjectivity – of the artist, that a bad artist (whatever that is) will be a bad artist researcher and a bad scholar in this field.

What makes a scholar a scholar is its education and professional link to an academy or university. The demands a professor, teacher or lecturer is in charge of in an academic environment of the twentieth-first century are very burdensome and not always easy to combine with an intensive artistic career. Of course the two careers can blend at some point, but not without influencing each other and, sooner or later, not without noticing the upward of one over the other.

For now the teaching staff positions are occupied by people who are not exclusively artists because: i) artistic research has not yet awarded enough students to ascertain what territories they will be occupying after completion, if the academy or the art world, or both. It seems reasonable to consider, however, that the shortage of post-graduate artists made it necessary to hire from neighbouring areas like aesthetics, art history or visual culture. What was due to a practical necessity and consequent pragmatic decision may have, at the same time, been conducive to defying relations, in most cases those tricky relations responsible for the wobbly state of affairs of artistic research, but also for its most challenging and glamorous committals; and ii) that's what makes these subjects interesting to the disciplinary field of artistic research, which is a context merger of different territories. Contributions like those of Annete Baldouf, a sociologist in the field of art, teaching at the University of Applied Arts of Vienna, and interested in "qualitative research methods, and their abuse, in the context of artistic practices"²⁶⁶, of Jan Svengunsson, also teaching at the University of Applied Arts of Vienna, a visual artist dedicated to the exploration of text for artistic and artistic research intents, of Florian Dombois, an artist and professor at Zurich University of the Arts, who studied geophysics and philosophy in Berlin, Kiel, and Hawaii in order to extend his artistic development and to develop a concept of 'art as research', of Jeremy Diggie, an artist currently teaching at University of Cumbria in the UK, with strong commitment to arts education and who has occupied teaching and heading positions in opposite parts of the globe and who creates complex narratives resorting to his own artistic experiences in order to enlighten about artistic research methodologies and outcomes, or of Erik Viskil, whose background in

²⁶⁶ Retrieved from <http://blogs.akbild.ac.at/phdinpractice/staff-and-participants/staff/>. Last access on: 30.06.2015.

museology, Dutch language and literature, speech communication, argumentation theory and rhetoric has committed him to the development of the Individual Writing Project at PhDArts curriculum in The Hague. Four cases, among many, that turn the mix of backgrounds and foregrounds the territory to problematize artistic research. If the reins were taken exclusively by independent artists, then artistic research would also be an independent field and not ontologically dependent on the academy, otherwise happening in artists' studios, galleries and public space whatsoever. It turns out that this ontological bound, as previously said, is what makes it an unsteady yet defying territory, and so it is very unlikely that it will ever be broken – at the price of doing away artistic research.

In place of prescribing the subjectivity of the artist-researcher, it is more convenient to deploy its multi-layered integrity. At this moment in time the artist researcher is still surrounded in oddity and impertinence. It is still quite often mistaken with the art theoretician or the failed artist. It is a strange species, marginal and struggling for its land at the academy and in the art world, and defending its integrity against modernist, romantic artists self-regarded as the gatekeepers of contemporary art and the contemporary art school. The artist researcher is the exotic, living in adverse climate and setting feet in someone else's land. Not many specimens are out there to be pointed as *the* artist researcher prototype. We are in presence, or rather in absence, of a hybrid of artist and researcher with multiple subtle implications in both subjectivities who reports to two different fields of knowledge, art and research communities. Therefore the specific community of artist researchers is still under formation.

This absent specimen is following the trail of variations of the ways to be artists during the course of the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twentieth-first: conceptual artist, linguistic turn heir, artist-as-curator, institutional critique instigator, artist-as-producer, educational/pedagogical turn accomplice and cultural studies spawn, altogether blend a fertile conjunction from which results the unstable organic entity of the artist-researcher. From each of these sources it takes a bit for itself. To each of these sources it establishes links and is associated with. It seems a pertinent query in the present days to look at the issue from another perspective; instead of just observing the influence the art world is having in the definition of the subjectivity of the artist researcher, it is about time to ascertain the impact this figure and its field of activity is having in the art world. If there's any then it might show that artistic research is not a submissive satellite of artistic development but actually is building a place and gaining authority in the dialogue with the art world. In order to conserve the specificities of both parts, the relationship with artistic practice involves the exploration of language and writing as a *medium*. If in the one hand it sets the potential of artistic research, on the other it has been pointed as the place of division with the art world.

Artists, and thus students of artistic research, have been experiencing a troubled relationship with the practices of writing and this aspect has been marking the developments and strandings of artistic research as an autonomous field of knowledge production.

The growth of an artistic research community is of great importance to the development of the field. It comes as necessary the formation of a relying audience to follow attentively the latest improvements and the most up-to-date works: one that addresses criticism to what's being made and is serious whenever it meets the interests and demands of adjacent disciplines rather than the ones of the field it belongs to; one able and willing to dialogue in the terms of artistic research; one motivated to structure those terms without ever stultifying them. All this from a genuine point of view of artist researchers who voluntarily set themselves with the two feet inside the artistic research territory: one leg in the art world, and the other not totally in the academy, but meanwhile also stepping in the ground for something else.

Uniqueness and art world affinity

Endeavors have been undertaken to reinforce the existence of a field that goes by the name of artistic research. To a large extent these attempts of establishing the field have been directed at the construction of an identity, delving in its procedures as well as in its subjectivities. It is a quest for identity committed in affirming its uniqueness more than stressing parity and similarities with other fields. What happens when such uniqueness cannot be found?

Arguments fail most often, lacking sustainability and coherence with such a view on uniqueness. How can a field simultaneously claim for its uniqueness through a privileged relation with art and be so dependent on the artistry of its outcomes? The link is strong and is to be kept: "How does one end up being an artistic researcher?", asks Kiril Kozlovsky. And he answers himself: "Obviously at first one has to be an artist of some kind" (2015, p. 5).

The idea of artistic research that I have been keen on is absolutely tied to the development of valid artistic results. This link to the art world not only is necessary for the mobilization of research – it is where inquiries take off -, but also to the validity and interest of results obtained through the research. The art world is – or desirably it is - the ultimate audience for the achievements of artistic research. Academic requirements and challenges are but steps in the development and conclusion processes.

Janneke Wesseling stresses that after graduation these PhDArts students "...are academics and this does not in any way harm the fact that they are artists. They are an artist and an academic"²⁶⁷. Accepting that a PhD or a DFA in art or artistic research is also an academic, the

²⁶⁷ Excerpt of the interview I conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available in the "Annexes".

major role of that individual is still and onwards knotted to the realm of the artistic. That is where the identity and the motivation of artistic research reside, and the disappearance of such link would seriously compromise the future of the field.

In order to prevent this paradoxical state, my suggestion is that no more appeal to uniqueness is nurtured. Also because the disproportionate search for uniqueness may incur in an autistic state that, instead of fostering research link to the art affairs, will contribute to their withdrawal. Uniqueness has not been anything but a fallacy, a damaging fallacy and a domestic impediment for a rather healthier and productive development of the field. It has been the motor of journeys that take artistic research to domains of lethargic discussion and which erroneously misrepresent the field. One of the favourite objects of criticism of skeptics relates to artistic research being making questions and talking to people that say nothing to artists or the art world, a situation hypothetically nourished by the pursuit of such exclusiveness.

Despite the efforts and the willingness in believing in such uniqueness, if it was not found yet maybe it is because it does not exist. Instead of facing this as a defeat, the thinkers and doers of artistic research could perhaps displace attention to the reinforcement of the connection to the art field instead of involuntary contributing to their removal.

Define a structure and undermine the discipline

Artistic research is commonly placed in the crossroads of art and academic research. This very often has brought on problems to the disciplinary status of the emerging field of research. Problems increase when academic research is mistaken by a strict scientific research, which unavoidably returns a series of incompatibilities with the field of artistic practice. The question of Pasi Lyytikäinen seems to embody these concerns: “Artistic research is a very heterogeneous area between art, research, practice, theories, policy, visions, avant-garde, experiments and knowledge. Artistic research a self-contradictory term. How can research be artistic?” (2015, p. 7).

In art hardly are at stake aspects such as verification, replication, systematization, universalization and objectivity. A set of incompatibilities stands in the crossroad and before the world of art when regarded from the point of view of scientific research. Academic research is following different paths of those walked by the art practice, also as something overt in a handful of categories cherished by one of the domains and repulsed by the other. But this is, in my opinion, the point that makes a whole difference: academic research is not a synonym of scientific research. Too often both designations are applied incuriously, when, in fact, their meaning can be set in different terms. Scientific research is, to a large extent,

academic. Academic research, especially if considered in artistic grounds, is not led by exactly the same premises.

Art is not concerned with explanations, with rigid structuring thought, with usefulness, with excellence. To say that art is not interested in knowledge is, perhaps, going too far. It is not a false statement, yet it is untrue. Or as says Erik Viskil, “Art is not meant, in the first place, to generate knowledge. It is meant to generate meaning and, of course, there could be a knowledge effect in it. But to configure art and art practice in a way that it becomes knowledge directed could be a way of changing art or changing a part of art. You could say, we here, as a group in this or that art school, we are going to produce art and try to meet certain rules about knowledge production. That could be an interesting experiment, but does it go for all art? I don't think so”²⁶⁸. Although most references to knowledge are biased – “In the beginning there is the belief that knowledge is a system you need to tackle and struggle with” (Nauha, 2015, p. 8) -, I think artists are uninterested in the knowledge perceived from a scientific point of view. Artistic research argues, instead, that knowledge has become elastic. Or, perhaps, what artistic research is craving for is “knowing”, instead of “knowledge”, since it is taken as an ever changing organism, never closed or an end in itself (Fitzpatrick, 2013, n/p). The research in the artistic field is intimately intertwined with the practice of the artist and therefore becomes highly personal. Speaking of “when research is artistic”, Georg Schulz and Robert Höldrich, both from University of Music and Performing Arts (KUG) of Graz, say “... although artistic research is pursued with an orientation towards science, it is art which is the ‘lead investigator’, i. e. art must be understood as both the means and the method of the research. ... artistic research must both contribute to the solution of an artistic question and also be intersubjectively documentable” (2011, p. 227). It is through the public discussion and the open access to this documentation – and so the appropriation of these outcomes is highly conditioned by the way they are documented – that artistic research becomes meaningful in a community, valuable for peers, and impacting future researches and artistic practice. Of course this isn't as simple as it sounds in the specificity of the artistic field, as their methods are often varying and are subjective. To this respect, Schulz & Höldrich state that “Although artistic methods are specific to their particular field, and their implementation in a specific art production is for the most part individual and subjective, the creative process and its reception can nonetheless be the object of intersubjective reflection and documentation. Through this intersubjectivity, artistic research leads to a discovery of knowledge...” (2011, p. 229)

²⁶⁸ Excerpt of the interview I conducted with Erik Viskil. The entire edited transcription is available at the “Annexes”.

The attempts to define rules for its conduction and tasks for its bettering are useless. “Probably there is no existing word or concept to describe the object of your research. This is something that you must ultimately invent on your own. It is good to be prepared that this might happen after years of research, when you are finally writing the introduction of your artistic commentary”, comments Julius Elo. And freedom and creativity are not really absent from these investigative endeavours, as the artist-as-narrator possibility has suggested previously. The sources utilized, the articulations experimented, the formats applied, everything is subject to discussion. I quote again a student of TAHTO to enlighten this aspect: “For, as Tennyson has put it “that which we are, we are”. If someone thinks that what I do, is not artistic research – well, I couldn’t care less. Oh, by the way – the quotation in question came to my attention in the 23rd part of the James Bond movie franchise, Skyfall. This movie had a substantial impact on my artistic research project. I have never asked anyone if it is ok to acknowledge a 007 movie as an important influence on my project. Maybe I should be ashamed of it – I do not know. I guess, I just do not care. I guess I would just like to say – paraphrasing a certain character: My thing is research. Artistic research” (Kiril Kozlovsky, 2015, p. 5).

However, it is not exempted from communicating to a community and to be exposed to their criticism. It’s as Pasi Lyytikäinen says: “Artistic research for me is *shared art and shared artistic processes*” (2015, p. 7).

The pressure of recognition by a system of knowledge and the desire of validation have, as well as the verge of disagreement compelled by the mentioned incompatibilities, initiated a justification effort by some of the artistic research thinkers. In view of the menaces, the discipline feels like arguing on its legitimacy for existing, although quite often using the wrong arguments. Quite understandably, the resulting activities are focused, to a large extent, in the reinforcement of certain aspects of the ontology of artistic research; what makes less sense is that such reinforcement is made at the light of a field from which this field wants distance from. Or said otherwise, why does artistic research use the scientific field as a barometer to ascertain its own rightness? As much as it resorts to arguments valid for the scientific field, it will never draw an autonomous path or get rid of scientific hegemony. The predictable result is two in one: both it will never fulfill scientific requirements, and it will be progressively removed from the artistic field where it ideally wants to set grounds.

At the same time, academic constraints can also be regarded as challenging inputs, but only in the extent that artistic research is able to negotiate regulations with the academy in a space of resistance necessarily created for the effect, or, in the words of Janneke Wesseling, “... I think the challenge is to keep alive this tension between the criteria that there obviously are, and

the uniqueness of each artistic project”²⁶⁹. These regulations can only prove really effective in the basis that they are subject to experimentation, and assuming that they are permanently open to be broken in order to give space to something else. Artistic research goes well with this positive iconoclast propensity in what concerns the constraints and requirements of academy, so that it undertakes the structure of the field only in order to undermine it afterwards. It is a continuous negotiation. As long as artistic research is compliant about all of these regulations, the results achieved can be anything but of academic nature – and then a process of “institutionalized” (in opposition to “instituting”) is at stake, according to Esa Kirkkopelto (2011).

This is not saying that artistic research does not need to make clear its scope and position against a variety of circumstances. It certainly does. However, to clarify things for the benefit of its subjects and with the intent of making the results more interesting, more expressive and more influential, that is another thing. It is the impact of results that will decisively contribute to the definition and strengthening of the discipline, and not the correct fulfillment of academic requirements: what’s the best syllabus, what’s the best methodology, what’s the best bibliography, what’s the desirable output. We have to look to what is being done as research and as artistic research in order to perceive what research and what artistic research are, through the lens of art. Only from there a positioning can be identified, and serve for a more general identity of the field. Only from there any sort of regulations – not the scientific, but one aware of artistic idiosyncrasies – can be rehearsed in order to contextualize and reinforce outcomes otherwise scattered.

Create a problem and then offer a solution

Part of the artistic research agents – by agents I mean people professionally engaged with artistic research, comprising teachers, artists in research centres, doctoral students – are committed in the tasks mentioned in previous tensional knots: that of reinforcing identity of the field by pursuing a legitimizing uniqueness, and that of actively adding to the structure of the disciplinary outline of artistic research. Most of the time it is ignored that artistic research was already there when the legitimizing problem was raised for the first time. Although the efforts to meet the requirements are pointless at this stage, when artistic research has already internalized a breather own, especially in this second vague of the beginning of the 2000s, they are in full force busying the productivity of the field. A great deal of theory regarding artistic research is not anchored in artistic interests, but instead is pledged in surpassing weaknesses

²⁶⁹ Excerpt of the interview that I conducted with Janneke Wesseling at KABK The Hague. The entire edited transcription is available at the “Annexes”.

like that of the lack of a common structure, as if it was a problem. The following step after the design of a problem is activating the theoretical machinery committed in finding the solution for it. During the pursuit of the solution are very likely to crop out other problems asking for their intervention. Problems detected by artistic research experts require, of course, expertise in the solution, keeping the round of activities considerably restricted in order to make it last. Laurie Anderson has put it pretty well in her single record adverting that “only an expert can deal with the problem” because “only an expert can see there's a problem (2010):

Now in America we like solutions
We like solutions to problems
And there's so many companies that offer solutions
Companies with names like Pet Solution
The Hair Solution. The Debt Solution. The World Solution. The Sushi Solution.
Companies with experts ready to solve the problems.
Cause only an expert can see there's a problem
And only an expert can deal with the problem
Only an expert can deal with the problem
(...)
So who are these experts?
Experts are usually self-appointed people or elected officials
Or people skilled in sales techniques, trained or self-taught
To focus on things that might be identified as problems.
Now sometimes these things are not actually problems.
But the expert is someone who studies the problem
And tries to solve the problem.
The expert is someone who carries malpractice insurance.
Because often the solution becomes the problem.
Cause only an expert can deal with the problem
Only an expert can deal with the problem
Only an expert can deal with the problem. (Anderson, 2010)²⁷⁰

It is cyclic, self-feeding, and transformed critical productivity in harmless *productivism* – harmless for the governing entities at control, but harmful for the very field they claim to be

²⁷⁰ Extracts of the lyrics of “Only an Expert” from Homeland album released in 2010.

developing. Again Anderson's eloquence: "The expert is someone who carries malpractice insurance/ Because often the solution becomes the problem".

It is a gear that follows the lines of political strategy, and very particularly that method of problem-reaction-solution: an artificial problem causes a certain expected reaction in the public who will ask for certain measures and intervention that the political instances wanted since the beginning to establish. As an example, some people argue that current global economic crisis is serving as a pretext to reduce social rights and dismantle public services. At the face of a widespread and alarming fragile identity and lack of structure, the necessity of meeting academic agenda in order to reach a more solid stage for artistic research is likely to be bearable and a popular solution, turning what used to be constraints to fight against into well accepted formalities – even if as a necessary evil. At some point being in the university has become a natural thing for artists – and natural things simply are, without a question. Struggling against control imposed by universities is also part of artistic research's task and a condition for it accepting the entrance in university. Take part in a counterstrike involves putting an end in endless theoretical digressions about administrative circumstances of artistic research as well as publishing unsuccessfully about what artistic research can possibly be. No one spends time trying to define what art is anymore. To hazard some definitions is interesting if only to break them; it's like trying to play with the limits of the territory, which is something artists do all the time, and what certainly artist researchers want to do as well.

Lively publishing culture about not making clear what artistic research is

Much of the published material referring to artistic research is made up of compilations and edited books. The interest of anthology as a type of literature lays in its ability of construction of discourse in a certain area. To the current affairs, it is the construction of discourse of artistic research that is at stake. At the same time anthologies are due to memory of events, acquiring a certain degree of monumentality – like monuments of knowledge of a given field, they are statutory. In addition to updating the existing notions to the present times, anthologies also pursue the idea of solid knowledge. They gather the most revealing achievements about a discipline and thus set the memory of that discipline. Anthologies pay homage and develop further the field.

The problematic aspect of the apparent cogency of such anthologies in the particular case of artistic research is that it is not accompanied by practical developments, at least until the present moment. There is a disparity between the high rates of anthological publishing and a similar importance given to the activities in the field. This ultimately means that artistic research is affirmed and legitimized as a disciplinary field but still it is lacking a productive

effect artistically concerned. As a result, artistic research is established through theory and anthologies almost exclusively, and these go hand in hand with formal structures that support such existence: higher education programmes, grants, international conferences, networked projects, and so on. Moreover, and most fundamentally, in what matters are focused the mentioned anthologies? In giving overviews of particular backgrounds, in discussing the originality and uniqueness kind of knowledge produced in the arts, in trying to appoint the best method, in pointing the inexistence of assessment criteria, etc. All in all, to approach topics that seem quite attached to the willingness of dealing with a more legitimized field. It almost feels like the debates around artistic research are preparatory for its establishment and only afterwards the real discussion will take place. If that's the case, then time is being squandered.

It is about time to shift from academic goals to non-academic goals in artistic research:

"Whereas pure scientific research often seems to be characterized by academic goal... artistic research focuses on involvement, on social and non-academic goals" (Slager, 2009, p. 52).

While conferences and seminars spread around and publishers rub their hands with glee at the perspective of a few more anthologies, the reflexivity and inquiry on artistic research should go to the next phase of effectively exploring what is being done as artistic research. What are the doctoral students doing? What have the doctorates done and are doing after completion? Abundance in doctoral programmes, dissemination events and a prolific publishing industry, all prove artistic research as a field of knowledge is a reality. We are not anymore in the process of accepting it, or of consenting it, but rather of exploring it. It is time that the literature and documentation on the field is engrossed by contributions of practitioners and by accessing their work. I agree with Timothy Emlyn Jones who, back in 2003, was already claiming that "Philosophy and art theory have much to contribute to this field, but practitioners have an obligation to contribute to the debate of thinking through art, no matter how meager an offering such as this" (2009, p. 32). It is the work done in disseminating events, in DAs, and DFAs that will set up the object of study of artistic research. It is thus in their agents' hands to change direction. The more published are hesitant anthologies on what artistic research is, could be or is not being, the more invigorated is the external fragile perception of the field. It is no longer acceptable that discussions about the *episteme* of artistic research are regarded as the core study of artistic research. The situation is in the course of changing, since a community of artist researchers is under formation with the first graduates being awarded very recently and in the next couple of years.

FINAL REMARKS**“AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH”**

I haven't yet met a person that could define artistic research in an unambiguous and non-tautological way. I have been longing to meet a person like that for some time – someone sent from heaven, an angel in disguise giving me inner peace and soothing my striving towards an answer. Now I do not want to meet this noble prince of truth any more. I do not care. (Kozlovsky 2015, p. 5)

The making of this dissertation was not intended to reach and fix a definition of artistic research. Not in the terms of providing a one line sentence, unambiguous and that in a satisfactory manner fits every agent, every agenda and every place dealing with artistic research. My presupposition, later confirmed, is that it is impossible to define artistic research since the intricacy with artistic practice is so strong, let alone desirable. The realization of the uselessness of such definition opens up a phase of post artistic research, to which my title “AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH” points to: an understanding that is simple, yet not hackneyed, and which supposes complexity, but not of the kind outworn by excess. This is only possible after certain conducts and established ideas of artistic research are questioned, criticized, transformed and sometimes abandoned.

With less than ten years of implementation, recent doctoral programmes – such as PhDArts, TAhTO and the ones at KuvA and TeaK - seem to contend that the activities in the field can no longer subject to this everlasting attempt of reaching a clear-cut definition, a method that fits all, and other strict criteria, otherwise risking the suspension of the transformative potential of the field. It is time to turn eyes into what artists are doing and how they, through their work and reflection intertwined, are contributing to push forth the discursivity of artistic research. ‘AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH’ is the yearned fulfillment of it, only made possible after moving ahead the aim of a limiting definition into the less bustling reality that artistic research is but in function of artistic practice.

Obviously there are hazards resulting from this open-ended state. For instance, what those seeking to rightly define the field would argue is that from such opening, what results is an absence of references nevertheless necessary to enter the artistic research productions, fundamental to distinguish them from the pathway of art works. However, the ideas contained in ‘AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH’ displace the outcomes of artistic research from the resulting

objects to the process of research experimented by these artists, finding the most significant consequences occurring at the level of subjectivity instead of being explicit in the artistic outputs. The references of access and assessment of produced objects are thus of minor importance in terms of artistic research if regarded from this perspective. In this sense, artistic research is not taken as a newly emergent field full of original possibilities; it is more like an alternative artistic practice led by a research-minded individual, and dependent on this artistic practice, whose results that ascertain the process of research are to be found in the subject rather than, necessarily, in the works of art, as well as in the documentation of the research developed. This documentation is what mostly differentiates artistic research from regular artistic practice. Understood as archiving practices as well as modes of production, the field is still very wide open towards the possibilities of documentation, and struggling between academic writing and more experimental alternatives also going on in these programmes. The current challenge is to balance one thing with the other in the avoidance of asking the artist for double work and with the intention of elaborating an articulation whose uniqueness would be impossible to achieve if resorting only to artistic practice or to academic procedures. The problematization of artistic research is exposed to a clash of perspectives of academy and art world, strewn the field with conflicting aspects and risky weaknesses. The text has gone through many of these risks, and I will sum them up right away in these final remarks. The negativity towards the field is considerable and hard to deal with, since even the most enthusiastic supportive visions can lastly be regarded as detrimental for their high probability of over-excitement.

Even though I am not for the definition of artistic research, my conviction that the post-artistic research now suggests a potentially challenging and exciting ground for artists to work on neither stems from the belief in an all loose *laissez-faire* state. 'AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH' is much more about the absurdity of generalization and abstraction of terms in research done in this field. It is the observation of the particularities of the works being produced that will render the valuable insights for future developments. On a personal level, 'AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH' is the presentation of that moment as a turning point in my own research practice.

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My doctoral outcomes generally appear quite obvious in the surface. They are absolutely not spectacular. As I am reaching the end of this investigation I have the impression that the conclusions are somewhat discreet. For more flashy results, I could have perhaps made a survey of what artistic research is, by quoting authors and their individual attempts to define this or that aspect. Maybe after a considerable amount of quotations the intersections would render some satisfying definition. However, I decided to stick to John Baldessari saying that to

make art you don't have to know what you want, but still you have to know what you don't want. And I was quite sure that I didn't want to define artistic research neither I believe one needs that to do artistic research and to set forth the field.

After supporting my rhetoric of artistic research in the necessity of an open-end notion that maintains a dynamics crucial to the critical inclination expected from the field, it seemed a lot more accurate to identify and problematize its tensional points, sometimes regarded as fragilities, than trying to define the way-to-be of artistic research.

Nevertheless, the entire investigation was directed at the close observation of activities undertaken by artist researchers and individuals dealing very closely with it, only to conclude that there are a few basic premises that should give consistency, and primarily identity, to the phenomenon turned disciplinary field of artistic research. On the flip side of these and in the problematization of the tensional points emerges what artistic research is not.

Besides what I call the basic principles, existent regulations vary according to the institutional context but are more or less simply administrative or technocratic, and shortly contribute to the development of the field. I argue that in face of too strict and superficial rules, artist researchers have the additional task of resisting and eventually of breaking them. On the other hand, the detection and proposal of what I called basic principles is not regulative enough to restraint the field, but only to orient it, to challenge it, and to push it on.

In what's left there is still a wide territory to explore, where creativity commands, but it is also important to keep feet on the ground. Artistic research is what it is, and not exactly what some enthusiasts want to believe in. Artistic research is a learning process to the subjects engaging on it, but very hardly a promised land or a brave new world immersed in the promise of eternal prosperity.

Quite interestingly for the investigative point of view, the young age – or, more accurately, the early stage of development, since age is not really that young - has been used as justification to either over excite a future yet to be, and also as the reason for its indefinite state, for its uncertainty, and for its inwards expansion.

The perception, somehow skew, of this state of permanent novelty has provided the space for a set of circumstances that, for the good and for the bad, has been shaping the developments and the consciousness of the field. Since more recent times, for less than a decade, developments in the area seem to be forcing the overpassing of the stagnant lethargy assigned to the novelty state. I have been referring to this shift as the second vague, or the second wave, of artistic research as a recognized field of knowledge production. It is in the advanced phase of this second vague that "AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH" is about to take place.

The first necessary assumption, or basic principle that I have got to, is that we are before an established field. Since the nineties that doctorates in the arts have sprung off and, more evidently, during the first years of the twentieth-first century programmes have been installed in several European countries. Also an amount of literature and collective commitments have demonstrated that the phenomenon has become an established field.

Generally accepted its existence, the literature has then focused on giving a clearer definition of the field, since for many authors, and initially for me as well, it seemed that artistic research lacked a strong identity, a common basis or a universalist methodology and aim. For a few experts the definition of this identity – through a variety of explorations, from elaboration on methods to curricula discussion – has become the fuel for their intellectual production, giving frequently the idea that artistic research's *raison d'être* was about defining artistic research, and everything else was rather self-evident. For a long time the practical aspects and the artistic approaches have received little attention. It is in this context that epistemological digressions gained space and harmfully (I'd say so) infected most of the visible face of the activity of artistic research. Their damaging repercussion is a consequence of their non-artistic origin, that is, the authors were almost totally theoreticians and either non-practicing or non-educated artists.

A second wave of artistic research has been taken place since the second half of the 2000s. This vague follows the first moment characterized by scattered work, individual prolixity, and few isolated graduates that would, some of them, become highly influential individuals to the present state of affairs of the field. This second vague is the present-day context, and started with a series of events that have hugely conditioned the direction took by the identity of artistic research and that transformed it into an international phenomenon, academically and artistically discussed. Things now are a bit different than in the early days – for the best, I think. A European structure exists to sustain current developments, to strengthen them, and sometimes (unavoidably) also to control them. The series of events that shape the mentioned structure comprise the births of the European Artistic Research Network and of the Society for Artistic Research, the settling of the doctoral programmes in places such as Royal Academy of Art in The Hague/University of Leiden, in Vienna and Gothenburg, in the Theatre Academy and the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki, as well as their exclusive TAhTO School of Artistic Research. It is guaranteed that every doctoral programme in art organized today is born from and shares a certain awareness of this history of artistic research. The existence of this history, authentic and legit, is also the reason behind the recent adoption of the term 'artistic research' in doctoral programmes names and in teaching positions. Perspectives vary, of course. These places, and doctoral programmes of art and artistic research in general, is where matters to

look when the intention is to conceive a proper idea of what the field is – rather than what the mediated view of theoreticians fixes in essays about what artistic research could be, or could have been, or will eventually become. Not that their knowledge and review are not important for the discussion, but it is the case that first person contributions have been badly missed for a more genuine and reasonable outlining. Artistic research is an institutional phenomenon, largely led by changes occurred in academic world which, in turn, were prompted by social and political movements. This is another of the basic principles I want to highlight and the reason why I am more interested in analyzing the power relations founding the field, rather than in a philosophical investigation on the particularities and multilayers of the produced knowledge and the quality of procedures applied. This is also the reason why I have moved to and focused attention in the specific places – institutionally academic – of FAFA/KuvA and KABK as runways for this research. The students and artist researchers at these (and other) institutions are the ones who are really shaping the field. It is about time to shift from trying to define the contours of the field to actually make it happen. It is now, “AFTER ARTISTIC RESEARCH”, time to break the paralyzing effects of novelty and of the claimed lack of identity of the field, and to explore it. In my text I am attempting to understand the formation of this new breath.

After the first years investigating the field, especially through a study initially concerned with the mastering of an informed state of the art, I have come to the conclusion that despite the importance and pragmatism of my basic principle of the institutional condition, the relation of artistic research and the educational realm was already exceedingly explored, for me to just make another study about it. In fact, the numerous published essays available in literature explicitly addressing artistic research were most of them tied to arts education studies and areas about art, like cultural studies and educational politics. Other basic premise of mine – which I have fairly retrieved from the academic clusters I have pointed out as basing the second wave of artistic research – is that artistic research is intimately – even necessarily – intertwined with artistic practice. This one, which sounds quite obvious for me now, was not so aprioristic in the beginning, and I hugely ascribe the initial default to the fact that I was almost exclusively informed by theorizing literature and lacking the contact with the first hand activities and the raw work produced in places such Helsinki and The Hague. If knowing in practice needs a base to become useful knowledge, knowing in theory also lacks a territory of practice to become a knowledge interesting enough. It works both ways. In that case, I came to the conclusion that the most important work to be done in the field of artistic research was to be steered by that second practical principle (not neglecting the first, though). My study was therefore designed in a dynamics between the basic principle that sees the academic institution as a necessary condition for artistic research, with that other principle that

demands attention to be directed at the artistic practice. This is the reason why I have exempted to dive deep into European educational policies and arts education literature, and opted, instead, to turn eyes into the art world, and put the emphasis of artistic research into contemporary art.

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The relation of artistic research with artistic practice and, consequently, with the art world, was (and still is) perhaps the most pasteboard and uncharted aspect of its identity. Simultaneously it represents the main focus of criticism by artists-artists, too concerned with art's autonomy and carrying out Romantic reminiscences, and is also the less explored stream of the field. Interest has been raised on the relation with the artistic field since programmes have openly stated they were targeting practicing and sometimes established artists, making artistic research more focused on art rather than in theory of art. This has to represent a shift, something we are currently going through and whose results are yet to be fabricated. Questions such as 'what changes occur in the practice and subjectivity of an artist after undergoing artistic research learning' are important to be set but can only be answered through guessing for the time being.

Since the institutional principle was to be kept nonetheless in my investigation, I had centered attention in the doctoral production of students in programmes in Finland and the one at KABK The Hague/Leiden University. This is why I have dedicated an entire chapter (3rd chapter "ESTABLISHING the phenomenon of artistic research as a field" to go through their activities, study their positions, work routines, calendar and documentation. This is also the reason why I have chosen to interview students and staff members of these programmes. I was unable to conduct all the interviews I firstly intended to, but nonetheless some interesting conversations took place, with fragments being used in the main text to introduce and reinforce ideas. The full edited transcriptions are available in the "ANNEXES" section for a better contextualization, and the read of their entirety will certainly disclose juicy and newsworthy thoughts in the voices of their authors.

Since in these places the interests of the involved individuals reside, to a great extent, in intervening in the art world through their practice – a practice that, in the course of the programme, is being professionalized – the two basic principles of my inquiry were assured: academic bound and practice of art.

In order to contextualize some of the ideas I resorted to in further chapters in this thesis, it seemed purposeful to follow the general "INTRODUCTION" with a proper conceptual framework. Hence in the second chapter I dedicated to problematize the field of artistic research from the socio-political perspective, accounting for transformations occurred since

the second half of the twentieth century until the present day, and which seem to contribute to the formation and emergence of the idea of a field of artistic research. In the duration of the framework trajectory I tried to establish several connections to artistic developments, to never lose sight of my territory direction, and to understand under this light the achievement of dematerialized art in the post-conceptual context and the emergence of discursive forms as artworks. These are presupposed to be nourishing the present state of artistic research. I also advanced some conceptual notions and arguments from which stand my current view of the field. It is in this trail that the ideas of *iconoclasm* and *aestheticization* gain space, that the critique of collaboration seems pertinent, and that the conjugation of micro-politics and the writing of complex narratives appear as relevant modes of production. *Productivism* is also a very important notion introduced in this beginning, which is crucial to a more critical view of artistic research, one that I maintain throughout the text, and from where I criticize the overflow of speculative literature in this theme, the sometimes overexcitement stemming in this field, and from where I design a shift of direction for the aftermath of these realizations. While elaborating on the “FRAMEWORK”, and throughout the rest of the text as well, I have also called several times on the more tensional aspects subject to criticism of artistic research, either some I perceive as weaknesses, and other are just usual targets of the criticism of the more skeptics, to which one may agree or not.

As previously said, I have dedicated the third chapter to the mentioning and commentary of publications, events and organizations that pretty much give evidence of the establishment of artistic research as a disciplinary field. I have also analyzed the doctoral productions and procedures of the Finnish context, as well as of PhDArts in the Netherlands.

Before going down to a more straightforward review of the impact of artistic research in contemporary art, it was of pivotal importance to approach what seems to be the most problematic and thorny feature of the field – also made a basic principle in my perspective –, but also the tool of transformative potential of artistic research: the writing *medium*. It is through the practice of writing that the research in and through the arts becomes documented and disseminated, and available for the community of peers to be discussed and appropriated. But it is not simply a matter of fixing a process performed in other artistic procedures; writing as the research medium, in an artistic context, is a process of making in its own right, producing results for itself, different of what is produced through art *media*. Therefore the accomplishment of writing tasks in doctoral levels is not about repeating in other language, what performances, painting, video and other artistic practices enable, but to produce something else intertwined with the first, either exploring the same issues, or in a complementary way. The end product will arise from the combination of the two parcels.

However, as highlighted in chapter 4, the regulations involved in writing tasks, and in academic writing in particular, more often than not are not of the taste of artists – especially artists-artists, making the issue of writing a very conflicting one. It is in this stage of documentation that resides the present and future challenges of artistic research. Also, it is in the exploration of ways of creatively handling writing that this thesis dedicates to in a great part, either through my acquaintance of examples accessed in the visited programmes, or by experimenting with the exercise of text, as done in the “PROLOGUE”. The conclusion is that writing tasks contain possibilities to combine artistic that should be enough to not be condemned to the felt negativity in such aprioristic way.

Nevertheless, it was the investigation of the impact of artistic research in contemporary art in chapter 5 that rendered the keynote conclusions to some of my initial inquiries. Since I was not led by any interrogation in particular, embarking instead in a more general yet extensive exploration of a field I perceived in an awkward sparse and prolix balance, my conclusions were also predictably not exactly striking or life-changing – as probably isn’t artistic research either. The sidelining circumstance that almost axiomatically is ascribed to artistic research in large-scale art world events – such as Manifesta and Venice Biennale –, is expressive and weighting in the conclusion that the impact of artistic research is mostly discursive and occurring in the subject level rather than reified in art works. Therefore, the consequences of the practice of artistic research are rarely detected in the artworks themselves, but located in the intellect and in the process through which the subject of the artist researcher accepts to go through when he or she enrolls in the doctoral programme. I have explored this aspect in the final section of chapter 5, “How research is being made present in the subjectivity of the artist”. To the most enthusiastic voices still looking for a life-changing field, this might sound disappointing. To those saturated of inconclusive rhetoric, this might be relieving. All in all, this conclusion and its simplicity are to me more encouraging than they are demotivating.

The tensional aspects, either perceived as fragilities or as challenging conflicts, are scanned in the sixth and last chapter, “PAIN FOCI”.

Especially since doctoral programmes have adopted the term ‘artistic research’ and teaching positions in artistic research have appeared, that it matters to ask: what are artist researchers expert in? What is so specific about their expertise? I was largely driven by this inquiry, and some of the most enthusiastic voices still promote the idea that there is some exciting novelty to be found out. On the other hand, the already long list of productions dedicated to artistic research reinforces that something specific is at stake. I believe, however, that the wrong questions have been made for a longtime, and thus the answers have erroneously shaped the field into something way more complex than what it actually – and fortunately – is. Although

this is not a definition – because it really does not matter anymore, and such realization is totally refreshing -, I foresee more advantages than disadvantages in just considering artistic research as a learning process, occurred at the intersection of academia and artistic practice, validated by the first and directed mostly at the second. Not as cynical as a mere line in the CV, but also not as unrealistic as the promise of new original field collecting hopefulness all the way.

It is way more convenient to call artistic research a phenomenon. But the evidences that it is formerly a disciplinary field are unmistakable. The truly consequence of this state is dependent on how artist researchers perceive and deal with the featured discipline, if through subjection, or by performing resistance.

Asked several times about the outcomes of my research, I have always felt that the question was imbued with a sort of scientific inclination. The same goes to when I was asked about my research question. I did not have one research question. I was, instead, led by the discomfort and the confusion perceived about the specific circumstances of a phenomenon that seemed too close to my daily life. The outcomes could then only be presented in this kind of very personal journey through the more tensional aspects of artistic research. It was a long journey, slow and ponderous, not without its very own mishaps, but, in the end, very insightful as a learning process. My interspersed conclusions are of utmost importance for my personal perspective on the field, and fundamental for the construction of insightful ideas and opinions to counterbalance some of the also abundant criticism towards artistic research in the one side, and sort of religious credence deployed in much self-evidence sometimes assigned to the field on the other. The personal framing into which I want to inscribe this research is very important and should be highlighted. Only after accounting to the personal emphasis of this work becomes acceptable the apparently discreet, yet solid, conclusions it achieves. These are maybe life-changing on my personal trajectory, but not really leaving anyone breathless from a global perspective. It is also only after this biographical climate that the geography of the investigation lies upon. Although I was all the time, and since the beginning, concerned with an European contextualization for my research topic, it was impossible for just one person – me – in the time span available, to exhaustively visit all European clusters with relevancy to the development of artistic research. At a certain moment, the Nordic countries and the Dutch programme of PhDArts seemed to me the cutting edge environments needed for a more informed study. Therefore I went to Helsinki and to The Hague. Other locations were left out: Sweden, Belgium, England and Ireland would be, perhaps, following my first choices. Also I am sure that other departments in different countries are developing interesting efforts on this field, even though they are not easily reachable since published literature does not account

them. Therefore I am not using the term 'mapping' for my incursions into the international sphere. In an even more personal level, I would like to have dedicated a more substantial part of this investigation to artistic research developments undertaken in Portugal, considering that it was the perception of this field felt and the research issues within the Faculty of Fine Arts of Porto that have largely urged my interest in this matter. However, I have found out in the course of this investigation, that many of the considerations and criticism towards artistic research in Portuguese universities and artists circles are either biased with the skeptical view, or dazzled by overexcitement. In some other cases, the name artistic research is being used to designate the production of theory in the artistic realm without further insight of the specificity of the term. As this second vague of artistic research has reached the interesting stage of a possible new breath in this "AFTER-" momentum, hope that Portugal also critically engages in international discussion is sustained and supported by networks of personal and institutional nature established in the meanwhile.

Far from aiming at the elaboration of a good practices text, I hope I had contextualized and critically analyzed all the invoked aspects so that the result goes beyond a set of self-evident advices. For my own practice it certainly allows for a new direction, more sustained, more informed with the produced knowledge and also more challenged for the future in the step after artistic research.

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ANNEXES

INTERVIEWS

These interviews are not strictly structured, but more like conversations I had following a set of questions that I have previously thought of but that I adapted to the course of the conversation in each case. These conversations were conducted during my stay as visiting researcher in Finland and in The Netherlands. The interviewees are students and members of the teaching staff of doctoral programmes related to artistic research.

Interviewees (order in which our conversations took place):

Simo Kellokumpu

Leena Rouhiainen

Saara Hannula

Ato Malinda

Erik Viskil

Yota Ioannidou

Janneke Wesseling

SIMO KELLOKUMPU

Performance artist and doctoral student at TeaK – Theatre Academy Helsinki

04.02.2015, 13h00 @ TeaK hall esplanade, Helsinki, Finland

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Catarina Almeida: I sometimes feel that I am kind of stuck in epistemology and I'm not really happy with it because it then seems like I am always trying to see what artistic research is. Is it something new? Is it some new kind of knowledge? How is it being produced? How is it becoming something? Is it an intersection, a special meeting between theory and practice? How does it work? You know, in this kind of situation and I don't think that's the right way to go to the issue of this research. So I have this very disquieting position and vision of myself doing this work because at the same time I'm going in all directions and I'm not really happy with it, I feel like I'm stuck because I will never come to a conclusion of what artistic research is.

Simo Kellokumpu: I understand. You can find so many definitions by different writers and contributors for this domain.

CA: For sure and perhaps I'm coming to a conclusion that perhaps the most interesting ones are kind of politically designed. As if artistic research isn't something that we can define in its ontology or in its essence; it's something that has been defined for a lot of circumstances that are coming to a point. Most of them are moved politically and socially, and are of course relating academy, and politics, and the art world altogether in this special moment that we are naming artistic research. But that's just made you a little bit more aware of where I'm starting from.

SK: This is probably an area, which is for you to talk with Leena [Rouhiainen]. She can tell more about the history and discussions which were involved when they based this artistic research programme here in Helsinki.

CA: Okay. When you told about your platform *ArcaHelsinki*, André [Alves] sent me a link and I went and read the introductory lines that you have there and I read that part where you say that "*Arca's function is not reduced to the academic artistic research only. Arca's purpose is to operate as a coupling platform between academic artistic research and the art-field*". To me at first it read as if you were proposing that there were two kinds of artistic research, one

being practiced inside the academy and one other being practiced within the art field. I was going to ask you what are the differences of these, in your perception. What are the differences between these two types of artistic research? But then I realised that I probably wasn't reading this the right way because you didn't mention artistic research in this broad field. You mention academic or artistic research on the one side and you mention art field on the other side. You did not mention artistic research in the art field. So, anyway, we still have two territories: 'academic artistic research' and the 'art field'. And you are proposing to merge both of them in the platform. I think that 'academic artistic research' risks being redundant, because artistic research in one sense is always academic. It's a condition for artistic research to go on within an academy. And artistic research is always intrinsically connected to the practice of art, at least in the best cases it is. So I was going to ask you what is your understanding of this 'academic artistic research'? How do you perceive it? Because you differentiate it from what is being done in the art field.

SK: It comes from my experiences, being in the professional freelance world for 10 years before I applied to this programme. The reason why did I start to search for programmes like this, was that I was looking for the possibility to be in a structure which offers you the consistency and support, to put it simply, to go through troubling questions in your practice. I chose Helsinki because they emphasise here that first of all they are interested in your practice, not the theories or philosophies that you master, or what you will master, but first of all you have to be a practicing artist before you can apply here or be a substantial applicant for this programme. And this was very appealing to me of course. My research topic is contextual choreography. Just a choreography, not choreography about. I experienced and I thought that this platform or this programme gives me the possibility in consistency to research this problem of 'aboutness', which is dealing with the representation for example. These kind of things which are not new in the art world, of course not. Time is one of the biggest issues here in terms of not to have any pressure to make productions in order to support myself economically. So I was relieved from these kind of productional pressures in art-making when I entered this programme. I was lucky to have a personal grant before I entered this programme, so I have had a chance to focus on this research, which is about the practice of choreography, also besides my work which I've done outside academia. But when I applied I really didn't know what artistic research was as such, even if they had basic information accessible to everyone. I called or emailed a colleague who had done her thesis from here and asked for further information and then she directed me to the right people. Then I just gathered more information and I decided to step into the application process. Another

question is, why to institutionalize yourself through this programme? Because that's also a process of institutionalization of yourself.

CA: It's one of the things that the more purists charge to artistic research.

SK: Yes. Or maybe not to understand the institutionalizing in a negative way either, which is how it is usually thought of. I think I was a very stereotypical applicant in terms of being in a strong questioning process of my artistic practice and unsatisfied about my practice and finding the terms and concepts, used in dance world, where I used to be part of, insufficient for me to understand my practice. I found it limiting. I was looking for something else, and the chance to go into these problematics. I didn't experience that I had that chance in the mainstream productional world.

CA: But still you have pressures being in the PhD. These pressures may not be the same as those of the art world, like doing big productions and having to deal with the public and audiences and that stuff, but you have work that has to be done within a limited period of time I think, your grant obliges you to do such. And you have other constraints, like adapting to a lot of regulations. Your project has to follow the instructions. I don't know, I'm just asking.

SK: Basically we are 'free' to do whatever we want as long as we have good arguments for how it is related to our research. When it comes to the temporality of the research I've planned it to take four or five years.

CA: Is it the academy that is giving you the grant?

SK: No, the academy is not giving me the grant. There are positions to be applied to become a research associate, which is a paid position, but then you have different responsibilities towards academia. Now I have a grant from another source.

CA: So you can do just writing in your dissertation?

SK: There has to be one or two artistic works because this is a practice-based programme in performing arts. But what are these artistic works is under discussion, it is to be discussed.

CA: What if writing is seen as an artistic *medium*?

SK: There is a vivid discussion about the writing part. How they call it, for example. Is it called reflection? Is it called thesis? What is it called? Writing is an artistic medium. Here the main

focus should be in the performing art works, then how to put the balance between the written part and the art works. Can the art work itself be an dissertation, which produces knowledge? These kinds of questions. But what I understand now about this unit is that artistic research is about producing knowledge from the practice that an artist has. But what kind of knowledge? It's not know what, it's not maybe know how, only. How to define knowledge that we are dealing with as artists?

CA: From what you were saying is it correct to think that perhaps the difference between doing artistic research in the art field and doing artist research within the academy it's a lot about having a structure that gives you space?

SK: For me, yes. For me this experience is that it's consistent as it's feeding you every month with certain seminars which you can choose if you find them relevant. So you get constant led stimulus from different professors and invited lecturers. Plus you have a chance to work with two supervisors, to have the dialogue.

CA: It's about having space and sharing your in progress work with... I'd say 'peers', but 'peers' is not really the right word.

SK: Also with peers. The community is very important. Especially here, there are people who are in similar processes with their topics and are trying to articulate, to find articulations in practice in the written way. And you share this landscape with them and then it's really reciprocal. But I think those are the main points. Consistency. It's a structural thing for me, mainly.

CA: So it's not that there's something in the mechanisms that's different. You can do actually, if you have a structure outside the academy, if you have your own space. You were telling me you've got colleagues that didn't want to be here. They do their work in their own spaces. And if you can start conversations from those spaces to those peers, you are also doing artistic research.

SK: Yes, I would say.

CA: You are institutionalised in a way because you're enrolled in the PhD, but what is the risk of this institutionalisation in your eyes? Why do you think that everybody is so afraid?

SK: We are making a doctorate here, which is slightly different than a PhD. I'm not afraid. I want this. I really want to be in this programme. But just thinking about it critically what

happens in this process within this academic programme. It's important to be aware of the process, like what happens there in terms of making a thesis in a certain kind of educational programme, which is in relation to a certain kind of art world, in relation with a certain kind of western society. But I don't experience being part of this kind of institution in a negative way. It's been the opposite. These kinds of opportunities and possibilities exist for an artist, otherwise maybe I could have quit and changed the profession. This programme is somehow offering exactly what I was looking for as an artist.

CA: So you don't feel that you are walking in a different - in a bad way – territory, than that you would be walking if you didn't... You don't feel like a foreigner here in the academy, not at all.

SK: No, no.

CA: Although there is a certain entanglement between the two worlds at this moment.

SK: Yes, I understand what you mean, but based on my experience it is a bit of a parallel world, in the way that it is not based on production, it is not based on exhibiting, it's not based on the 'goal'. It's not aimed this way, like what I experienced in ten years that the aim is to make a production, and then you make a new one, and then you make a new one and a new one and so on. Of course it's possible in the art world as well that you deal with the same question for years and many artists do that. But especially here I just experienced as relieving from certain ideological structures, and economies, and relations to art and experiencing art.

CA: It's not the case that you are feeling less of an artist...

SK: No, absolutely not.

CA: I'm just saying this because a lot of the criticism that take place in Porto comes from those who see the increasing number of PhDs within the art academy as destroying the art world. As if because you are doing your PhD, you are becoming an academic and not an artist anymore. We're dealing with this kind of situation, but you are telling me about the opposite thing.

SK: I don't understand this, or I understand this criticism, of course, but then why not to give this possibility for artists to go on and to move on, and to really be in this consistency that these programmes offer? I would say that what I've done now in one and a half years here would have taken me, by myself, maybe three years to make it or to develop myself, to

become more percipient, aware of my own practice and the problematics of it. It's a very slow process anyway, but this has been feeding me in a critical way that it has given me also the support or, I mean, I've gone further, I've taken more steps than I would have done without. This is my experience.

CA: I understand this is your vision, but is it a shared vision? I mean why this interest, this late interest, or this renovated interest that the art world is going through into the academy? Why are the applications increasing to this academy all of a sudden? It's kind of a recent phenomenon. Artists are seeing the academy again as a potential territory of productivity, but productivity in a good way, not in a bad way of the pressures that you are saying about the art world.

SK: Yes. There are many opinions and discussions going around this one, and one point is what you said, that can be criticised that you enter this kind of programme and then you become less of an artist. I find it very absurd and obsolete. And the other one is that artists are escaping to academia in order to save the art from the reality of the art world, where the prevailing logics are under the logics of production and the logics of certain economic and ideological structures, which are unsustainable.

CA: So you are running away from pressures, but then you enter the academy and you have other kinds of pressures, because you have to publish, you have to be evaluated, you have to be assessed, that whole academic thing.

SK: Yes.

CA: And you are subjecting yourself. In a voluntary way you are subjecting yourself to this structure.

SK: I choose, it's a matter of choice. The application process to this programme takes many months, so you really have to be motivated. What I've realised here is that I have to do double work, I have to defend my work towards the scientific academia that is 'why is this research? What kind of knowledge does this produce?'. And then I have to defend my work to the art world, 'how is this art? How is this connected to art making? So I am in a double position, having to defend my work in both directions within artistic research. That I'm not either or, but I'm in-between. The question could be how in this domain we could also make it so that it's not that much of a heavy burden, but to be aware of it, of course, and then towards the art world like how to make these connections. That's the on-going discussion.

CA: You are calling it a burden, so can't these constraints at the academy, put on researchers and on the artists that have become researchers, be dealt with a productive feeling over it? You can see the positive effects of a crisis. You are with these constraints so now your creativity is going to be directed at how to deal with these constraints and this somehow is an input to your work. It's just a different input in the art world.

SK: I agree, if I understand you right, these constraints where I am now, where I have chosen to be, are giving me also more space.

CA: It's a possibility, if you see it that way. There are some people that would probably see this as limiting.

SK: Yes, sure. But I don't I don't experience it as a limiting pressure. I see it as contrary, it opens to me so many views and horizons that it's overwhelming. These were not opened to me before this programme, in my practice. I've been developing, expanding and deepening my own practice in these frameworks.

CA: So we are talking of a movement from the art world into the academy that gives birth to artistic research. There is this interest of art in the academy, and this is one way of seeing things. Do you think that you can also see the other way? Is the academy also interested in the art world, and that's why artistic research arises?

SK: Yes, sure. This programme where I am is in the University of the Arts.

CA: There is the possibility it's a little bit of the two happening. From one side, of course, what's developing in the art world is having an impact on the artistic research, because artistic research is about the practice of the artists that are engaged in artistic research. What about the other way round? Is artistic research having an impact in the art world?

SK: Yes I think artistic research contributes to the epistemology and ontology of the arts which can be disseminated various ways, for example in art-education.

CA: You think it's mostly connected to pedagogy, the effects of artistic research in the art world?

SK: Partly yes, but for me it is about making art and contributing to that broadly. At least for me it is connected to aesthetics, sharing and experiencing art with various modes and dealing with their social, political, economical questions for example. I have understood why I got so

anxious in my professional direction. I was dissatisfied with my practice and the aesthetics of it before and now I have realised through this process into what this dissatisfaction was connected, what kind of relations to the techniques of the body for example, where are they related in a theoretical way or philosophical way and - when it comes to aesthetics of course - what kind of aesthetics do you want to share with your practice?

CA: Paradoxical and interesting at the same time.

SK: Yes.

CA: When I was speaking of artistic research having an impact on the art world, I was thinking if there is any chance that artistic research is coming as the new way to be an artist and if it is taking part in the natural development in the artistic world. Like you have cubism, you have surrealism, you have conceptualism and now we have artistic research as *avant-garde* movement in the art world. Do you think this is a possibility? You have new subjectivities at stake here. You have artists-as-producer, artist-as-curator, perhaps artist-as-researcher, as a new way to be an artist in the twenty-first century.

SK: Yes, absolutely. This makes sense to me what you say. The world around an artist changes, so it's understandable that the role or a position of an artist changes as well in the society. For example, nowadays I write about my practice more. I didn't do that so much before. It was a possibility but I never thought of it as that relevant thing to do, whereas now I've understood that it has a big relevance and it's important to articulate your practice into the text as well, and to disseminate your practice through that, and the questions and curiosities that you have with your colleagues in the art world. There are lots of artists that write about their practice but for me it is a fresh thing.

CA: If you talk to your colleagues, researchers, that are in the same PhD as you are, do they show the same motivations for being here? As if they were trying to escape the pressures of the art world and they found here a kind of a bubble, a creative bubble to dedicate to their projects, to their researches, to their own practices? Or are there many different motivations?

SK: There are many different motivations. But one common thing could be the questioning of your own practice or having some kind of a shift in which you don't necessarily understand what's happening yet, or you are not satisfied with your practice, which has been going on and then you start to examine it. These shifts are somehow what people are problematised

with, this is what I recognise that is something that we've been sharing.

CA: I've been reading synopsis research synopsis of students who enrolled in this kind of PhD and I have come to some differences of what's expectable from traditional research, for example. Usually artist researchers do not have the research question that is quite mandatory in other more traditionally framed research and usually they introduce their research synopsis by saying that I'm interested in concepts a, b, c, d but my practice will experiment over the idea of choreography, for example, and also methodologically speaking they don't adapt pre-existing methods and ways of doing also from other areas of knowledge like qualitative research. Well, sometimes they do but it's not a general option and what happens is quite interesting that is they use the practice as a starting point and they try to import the same mechanisms of making sense that they are using their own practices, and they try to use those very same mechanisms of producing meaning, but in writing. Which is not the same thing of saying the same things with other languages, but it's a different thing. And this is very interesting because they start from their own practice really as a starting point for their researches and this is where and when artistic research starts to have a place. It is in this kind of transition from importing and exporting these mechanisms of making sense from one place to the other. For example in your case, you say that you are interested in choreography in a broader sense and you use choreography to somehow appropriate and dismantle contexts also in a broader sense of the idea of context. How would you describe this as your artistic practice first? And then in the second moment, how would you re-describe it as your artistic research practice? Is it different?

SK: If I understand you right, the artistic practice itself is the method of doing the research. The subject, object and the outcome of the research is the artistic practice itself, at least this kind of an idea is close to me. That is not academic research in a certain way that you've taken an art object or you take art practice and then you look at it and you make external research about it.

CA: At least it shouldn't.

SK: Yes, this is what I appreciate that it comes from the processual practice itself, that's the method of doing the research. Then I have to resolve the problems of how to transform this practice into two dimensional linear form, linguistic form, symbolic form. This shift is crucial. How to move from my practice to writing. The programme constantly offers writing courses.

Some people are already writers here so they don't need this kind of courses. I didn't had

writing as a practice for myself that familiar, even if I've studied literature and it's been nice to write also, but not as a practice.

CA: When you mean that you are practicing writing you are always doing it in close contact with your practice itself?

SK: Yes, mainly so. But the courses stimulate writing from various angles, so it is possible to write about something else than your research too, while getting used to writing as practice. To write about something else and then you can go back to your research. But yes, I wouldn't say that my artistic practice is different than my research at the moment. I can't separate them, it doesn't make any sense. And of course it has consequences. I haven't applied for production houses for maybe three years. I quit. I stopped doing that because based on my experience of the economical structure where you enter. You have to have marketing pictures maybe one month before and you receive emails like 'now we are making a brochure, do you have a text?'. I understand this, but this kind of logic is not significant for me anymore, as a mode of making art. I don't want to be in this kind of structure. I have incompatibility at the moment with this structure, maybe later not.

CA: Yes. Probably later you will shift again and this is... you are set in motion.

SK: Yes, it's possible, but it's also an ideological question. Do I really want to participate in this kind of economies and ideological structures? I find this place where I am now also about rethinking and redefining these modes of sharing art with the public and to find different ways and to find ways, which are balancing certain ideological or economical powers in the society also. Not to be against, maybe, this is not the point, but just to balance.

CA: It's kind of resisting, because resistance isn't really about denial...

SK: You're right.

CA: ...which is I think the common mistake of that criticism of those who say, 'No, academy, no! You're not an artist anymore because you're in an academy!'. That's a denial, that is not resistance. Resistance framing is a lot about being in motion as you are, like making dialogues with structures of power and recognising that you are inside a structure of power in order to dialogue with these relations of power and knowledge that... well, you can't say that there aren't, because there are, they exist.

SK: Absolutely. And the aesthetics that you propose into these structures of powers, what kind

of aesthetics are there? And what kind of aesthetics do you want to propose and what is visible, what is not visible in these structures? It's very interesting. What kind of bodies are allowed? What kinds of voices are allowed in these structures and what kinds are not? What kind of temporalities? Of course it's a political question.

CA: What about your Prakticum last week? Prakticum is a class that you have, once a week?

SK: Once a month. It's in a seminar week once a month. At the moment the structure is two and a half days seminar per month. Then the rest of the week, two and a half days, is the ongoing courses throughout the whole year. For example now we have affect theory, performative research, performance as an environment / environment as a performance and so on. Plus the writing class for me. You can choose and make your own curriculum however you like and what is relevant for your research. I think they are changing Practicum next year, that we would have more shared practice in the seminar weeks than just one day or one morning. We have a research seminar also on that week, every month, where there are presentations, which is kind of practice as well. It's up to you how you want to present your research. It doesn't have to be PowerPoint, but more like experimental things.

CA: What did you get from that session? What were the outcomes?

SK: I'm waiting for the feedback. It's a place to test things, like how people react, what kind of feedback people give you. It's not about success and having certain kinds of goals. It's a place where you can share this not-knowing, like I don't know what is this but I would like to try it. And then, people are reflecting on that, and that gives you the knowledge and information. The critical reflection that you get from them supports and helps to move on.

CA: But you are observing all the time?

SK: It varies. Sometimes I'm doing myself also.

CA: Yes? But on the Practicum? You follow those instructions? Like now we are giving to push, you push for 15 minutes, for example, whatever you want but only push. And what are you doing during those 15 minutes? Are you looking at what I am doing?

SK: No, I was doing it myself also.

CA: You are doing some exercises?

SK: Yes.

CA: So you are not seeing what's happening?

SK: No.

CA: So how would you relate afterwards to the experience of the others or is that not the point?

SK: To reflect it on my own experience and putting it into dialogue with other's feedback.

CA: On your own experience. So it's not always about what the others are doing.

SK: No. But it can be also. I mean there are no strict rules or instructions for these Practicum sessions for us. We can observe also.

CA: I was wondering how you relate to our reflections on your exercises. For example, in the case when you told us to push, I spent 15 minutes like this on the table, with my fingers and then you said, 'Well, write about that experience'.

SK: Yes.

CA: And I'm not used to this kind of body exercises, really. So my description went something like this, 'I pushed the table with my finger, I pushed with my finger the table, with my finger I pushed the table, the table I pushed with my finger.' 'If I send this to Simo, how is this useful for his research? How is he relating to this reflection and is this being useful for him?'. Because it's kind of so empty you know, the reflection is emptying itself because of this difficulty that I have in understanding how to appropriate these body exercises into reflection, but that's I think that's about the different backgrounds that we're coming from. And then you say, 'Okay, now we change the subject and now you are someone else that are describing that same thing. And I just did the saCA: 'he pushed so hard the table with his finger and blah blah bah blah blah'. So now you are telling me that it's not only about seeing what others were doing, but also you experienced yourself these very same exercises.

SK: Yes with many participants the information is multiplied and the questions gets many voices at the same time from different backgrounds. This is interesting feedback for me what you say now, that it's so empty and it's so boring and this is the reflection that I hoped would come. This is your experience. This is already having a lot of information from you. That you are experiencing it as something which doesn't produce anything.

CA: It's not that I'm experiencing it as something that does not produce anything, I'm just in the place where I'm in expectancy, I'm very curious in knowing how is this useful for you. Okay, this is different from saying that it's producing nothing.

SK: Yes, I understand.

CA: I know it's producing this for people that are probably used to dealing with these kinds of languages, the body languages or the body knowledge. Me myself I experienced it as an exercise and that's it. Well, I could, of course that I could come and say, 'Well I pushed with all my force and my power and I was all wet my hair was and I was dripping and that hurt'. I can do that and then I did for the other exercises, I tried to be a little bit more warm and descriptive and to bring some emotions to it, but in that one I said, 'No, I have difficulties in relating to this exercise and I will try to show this in my descriptions as well'.

SK: Yes, sure. There is not first of all, of course, right or wrong, or good or bad in this kind of reflections. How is it useful for me or for my research? One possibility is that I would realize it later on, or as a collection of reflections. I gather certain kind of the reflection archive from these exercises, because I'm going to do them somewhere else as well, and then you collect the pile of archives through the experiences people have had. But how to contextualise it into my whole research? For example, in this case about the interest and relation to the environment through these six basic movement concepts what we learn as a child. And this is just one choice to pick up one relation to the environment and what does it produce at an experienced level for people? This is already interesting for me and I can use it somewhere. I can quote it for example in later contextualization of my research or to text if it's necessary. And of course then it comes to the questions. I'm kind of collecting an archive of different experiences and then later on when I'm more clear with my stuff maybe then there are already reflections which I didn't know at this time what is the significance of it to my research. But I'm aware that it's not whatever. This is what I know. It's not whatever in the Practicum. It is connected to my research, but how? Where is the link of this person's experience? Or these persons' experiences and the questions I'm dealing with? Last year I did some workshops in Reykjavik and I have the video documentation and then I had the reflections as text as well. Now these reflections start to echo, like 'okay, I go back to them'. I made this exercise there and this person said something. Then it starts to get aligned somehow, the dialogue with the practice, what you've done in different contexts.

CA: You told me the other day that you are preparing a crediting seminar discipline here in

the academy for those artists that are not willing to have years-length education, like PhDs and the like. So you are preparing something else that is called artistic research?

SK: This is what you have to ask from Leena [Rouhiainen].

CA: It's you and Leena [Rouhiainen]?

SK: Me, Leena [Rouhiainen], Esa [Kirkkopelto], and...

CA: Yes.

SK: ...and then Tuuja, who is one of the doctorates also, so we are four. It was proposed and then who is interested to join to plan this further... Me and Tuuja were interested to develop or to be part of this process of developing this 15 credit.

CA: 15?

SK: If it's 15, they said it can be 15 and it can be 10 but 15 maybe in a year that would contribute to the need to develop your practice as an artist without going into the heavy four/five years. It can be already enough just to have the platform just to share your practice and to discuss about it in one year. So this is probably something you have to ask Leena [Rouhiainen]. It's just an idea at the moment.

CA: I was going to ask you if it's called artistic research in itself, because there is also this interesting thing that most PhDs - this is not a PhD but anyway -, these PhDs that are emerging that have artistic research in their names. I don't know if yours here is a PhD in artistic research but in TAHTO group, for example, it is a doctoral programme in artistic research, so why call this artistic research? It's also redundant because we had before these PhDs in visual arts, performing arts, it does presuppose that these artists, as they are enrolled in a PhD, they are doing research already. So why to stress even more this research framing by calling it artistic research? We have the PhDs in visual arts, in performing arts, in theatre, in dance, whatever, and there happens research because these artists are developing research for the context of the academy, so there is artistic research happening. And then started to emerge at the same time, lately at least, these PhDs that have artistic research in the name. What is a PhD about artistic research? Is there a difference between a PhD in visual arts, for example? What is a PhD in artistic research about? Is artistic research a subject as such? You know, there are disciplines that are called artistic research, what is the object of this?

SK: Yes, so do you mean that if a person makes a PhD outside the artistic research programme, why do you need artistic research?

CA: No, no. For example, there is a discipline at KuvA that is artistic research. That discipline is about artistic research and I am thinking to myself, 'What is taught in that discipline?' What is the object of artistic research as a discipline?

SK: Okay, I understand.

CA: If it is to deal with questions like, what is academic writing? What is institutional framing of artistic research?, more kind of technical stuff to artistic research, I then think that it is a very risky territory to enter as an object of artistic research, because it somehow disconnects it from the practice of the art world and connects it to a more bureaucratic approach.

SK: I understand.

CA: So I'm asking you, as you are proposing a credited seminar that is called artistic research. But now I'm not sure if it's the name that it will get or not. What was then the object of study?

SK: What are the conditions or the qualities that makes it as a discipline that can be taught?

CA: I have the subject of study of photography you know you are doing photography, and painting is painting, and choreography is body movement, and artistic research is about what as a discipline? What are the routines between teacher and students in such a...?

SK: Yes, I understand.

CA: I hope it's not only this technical and bureaucratic approach.

SK: The technicity is about the administrations in academia, I guess. But you are asking, why to make it as a discipline?

CA: Yes, exactly.

SK: I think, the first thing that comes to my mind, it has its own history. Within, for example, *avant-garde* movements there are many artists who have done already artistic research, which can be considered as such, which is how it is now on-going discussions about artistic research. Or is it practice led? Or is it practice based? Or practice as research? Or, here it is called artistic

research instead of practice based or practice led. They have chosen artistic research here. I don't know why they have chosen this one. This is maybe also something that Leena [Rouhiainen] can answer, because it's connected for sure to the history of the art university here, and to the on-going debate that was happening in the end of the 90s in the art academies. I don't have a complete idea of why it is here this way. But the main point is that the discipline is open, multidisciplinary and based on artists' practice.

CA: But you think that this that you are talking about like choosing the best certain name, understanding the differences between those different names that are used in different countries for example, all this conversation, is this a topic for discussion within a discipline called artistic research?

SK: Yes I think so, and a very important one.

CA: So these are the kinds of things that would be discussed in as a study object.

SK: Yes. This was basically our first year course, which was called artistic research. We went through different texts to get to know what different thinkers, artists and writers mean by artistic research. What do we mean by artistic research? What do we mean by performative research? What do we mean by critical theory? It's this kind of similar on-going pool of discussions like what do we mean by artistic research? And through these discussions there starts to be focus points which different academies are choosing as artistic research or as practice led or practice based research. Finnish programme is different than in the UK, for example, or the people who I met in Germany. In Berlin they were very aware of this programme that it's practice based and it emphasises the artisthood, not the theoretic-side or the philosophical one. Some of the people I met said their programmes were really theoretical, no practice at all.

CA: It is important, but sometimes I also find it problematic because you have this huge amount of literature about artistic research that has been published over the last 10 years or so, really massively. Most of them seemed to be trying to come to a conclusion of what artistic research is. We should. Because it's, I don't know, 30 years that we are saying that there is a new emerging field called artistic research. But emerging after 30 years it's old already, and still we are not able to say what it is because it's different from place to place. So this literature is concerned with trying to get a definition or at least some guidelines about what artistic research is. But what happens is that you reach the end of the books and you always have this sensation that, 'well, I don't know more now than I knew before I read

this book'. And this is happening in all of them. This is a situation that is a circular situation, you are always coming to the beginning. But it's still being published material and there are departments in faculties being structured around the issue of artistic research, there are teachers that have become experts in artistic research. This is about the expertise. So there is a huge structure and mechanism that is inventing a problem for itself, to then be concerned in giving a solution to it. It's a self-feeding system and this is very neoliberal if you want. This is very positioned inside these logics and this ideology of neoliberalism. So this is what comes to my mind whenever I think of artistic research as a discipline. We can be endlessly trying to define the problem and trying to approach many solutions to this problem. And we already know in advance that we will never get to that solution.

SK: Get to the conclusion.

CA: But still we try and still we formulate new courses, and still there are new departments being assembled to discuss this, but is there really an interest to come to a solution? Are these people really interested in finding a solution? Because if you find the solution, if you define what artistic research is for once and all, then there is a lot of structures that stop making sense. But only in this vision of artistic research being this bureaucratic thing, I mean, this technical thing, of course I'm not putting in the same baskets this idea of artistic research that we have been talking about, of being more connected to the practice, because this will always be on-going as long as there is practice being done in the artistic field. I think there are these two possible for artistic research that are happening at the same time: this that is more connected to practice, and this that is more concerned with theoretical perspectives of defining what artistic research is. This last is more epistemological it never comes to an end, so it's a continuous production that does not have a real outcome, only in economical terms, because it is about money, about politics...

SK: Yes, and the degrees.

CA: And the degrees. This is one group of things. Then there is the other completely opposite aspect of artistic research that we've been talking about.

SK: Yes, I understand. And it reflects to the questions also in a society what is art and what is artistic research? What kind of notion or concept of art is behind when you define artistic research, can it be defined? It would be sad if art could be defined, as a research domain also. I understand it has a fluid field in a way that part of it is that it escapes the definitions. This is one motivation why I find it intriguing for me as an artist, instead of doing the research in the

university, which has its statements at what the research results and processes has to contain. Here the case is not the same and it stays in this way alive, to put it simply. I'm not feeling that I'm somewhere academic in this way. I find it very sexy because it's alive. I don't feel like I'm suffocating or like I'm in an academic environment even if I am in a certain educational system, in a certain country, in a certain political landscape, of course, but this is not my experience. My experience would be different if I was in Helsinki University, for example. I'm not sure if I would have done this there or if it would be possible for me as an artist to be there, on the experiential and practical level. But I don't know, this is just of course my reflection, but I understand your concern that it's very interesting and important to put this question on the table with the people who are in charge of these programmes. This is what we also share here as peers. This is not a claim that artistic research happens only in academia, of course not, it happens on the field a lot. Okay, what do you teach then? One way how it is commented here: the student-professor verticality doesn't exist here in this academia as I experience it. They share in dialogue. They don't teach us but stimulate. From the first day I remember it was a bit of a shock as a newcomer that we sat around a table, there were some international guests and the professors as well, and then we started talking: 'what do you think about this one?'. You are the one who is creating the definitions, the redefinitions, instead of being in this verticality, which can happen in the universities, I guess, I don't know. It's possible as a discipline. But I would like to read about this more when you come to the conclusions, like what kind of answers do you collect? What do you teach in this discipline? How do you...

CA: Me?

SK: What kind of answers do you collect now within this research of yours? This would be very interesting to read... I remember last Spring there was this Ice Breaking Fantasies Artistic Research Festival here.

CA: Yes, in September.

SK: Yes. And there was this one situation when Mick Wilson and someone else were like 'but this is not artistic research', 'this is artistic research', and then disputing and arguing about it. Like, 'there has to be a written thesis', then the other ones, 'No, it doesn't have to be, an exhibition can be your thesis', 'No, there has to be a written part'. So, yes, interesting and on-going.

LEENA ROUHIAINEN

Dancer, choreographer, professor at TeaK – Theatre Academy Helsinki

09.02.2015, 14h00 @ Leena Rouhiainen's office at TeaK, Helsinki, Finland

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Leena Rouhiainen: Do you have this? [showing me Robin Nelson's anthology "Practice as Research in the Arts (2013)].

Catarina Almeida: Yes, I have that one.

LR: Annette [Arlander] wrote about the Nordic.

CA: Yes, yes. It started there, more or less. I was doing research and then I stumbled in Annette's [Arlander] texts. Then I also have a colleague from Porto who is here now doing the PhD at KuvA.

LR: And who?

CA: André Alves.

LR: Ok.

CA: Ok, so. You've been dealing with collaboration in your work since a long time. I've been reading things, and I found what I think was a presentation or a paper that you presented at Sibelius Academy with other two people back in 2010 or 2011.

LR: Yes, Soili and Eila.

CA: It said something, like 'Leena Rouhiainen, in turn, has explored artistic research as a collaborative and performative venture together with artists working in the field of performing arts. She's interested in collaborative creativity, the emergent nature of artistic processes and co-relative knowledge production'. This somehow gives me a line to start from. I'd like to know what this notion of artistic research as a collaborative venture comprises.

LR: There's a tension there. The performing arts, theatre and dance especially, are ensemble work. And even if there might be different roles, the recent scene has been about people turning to devising, people turning to explore and utilize different approaches and there no longer is this distinction between performer, choreographer, director, dramaturge, but

everybody is sort of involved in this. That's one aspect of it and then the... So what I see would be important in research is also to start dealing with issues in a shared manner. But the tension comes with the tradition that academic researchers usually work on their own, they produce their... they learn to be researchers on their own except for... perhaps, in the medical field in which they collaborate in a laboratory project run by a professor. But even there they have their clear specific part or task that they're doing. What I tried to do is I've worked in artistic projects with people who have been also involved in artistic research, either being post-doctoral level researchers themselves in artistic research, or doing their doctoral research. And it's fed into each one of our projects and then we've probed about this either separately and in a few occasions together, about these processes. This is practically what I've done. I'd like to see our institution start promoting collaborative projects, but so far in terms of funding has not been really supportive of that. We have one doctoral student who is doing a shared PhD project with another one, so they are doing the same project, they are writing about the same thing, they are developing it together in dialogue. But this is formally an emergent trend.

CA: I'm asking this about collaboration because exactly of that. You're saying that researchers have somehow learned to be researchers on their own. But from since not long ago things like collaboration, networking, interdisciplinarity, have become buzzwords in the art world and especially in the artistic research field, and I am interested in also trying to understand how do you see the argument that suggests, more or less, that collaboration, for example, or networking, have become kind of an *ethos*, a strong subjectivity in artistic research. Do you think that these notions run the risk to be perverted? Or are used, for example, to legitimize research in certain cases, or calling money for projects or somehow are neo-liberalist or post-modern. I understand that there is a creative potential in this kind of things also.

LR: There is always this threat that you are pointing to and we're in a phase that there is no one understanding of what artistic research is. I think artistic research even in the art University, in Helsinki, the different institutions have started to build their own kinds of practice that determines what it is in these academies. So, it's slightly different in the Fine Arts Academy, it's slightly different with us and it is quite different at the Sibelius Academy, for example. So, I think it has to really do with the institutional frame. And one thing, I think, why artistic research and networking or the community that's doing it is important, is that what artistic research is, is something that emerges in practice and it emerges as a communal event or communal undertaking. We are talking and doing something somewhat similar and starts sort of building this vein or what it is. It is not on the outset something that you really easily

can determine. It is research that involves art practice, and reflection, and knowledge production. What does this all mean? In our university what used to be academic freedom on the Doctoral-level that you come in, you're accepted as a doctoral student and then you do your work. You have two supervisors. That's basically it. And then you independently do your dialogue with your supervisors and you go to conferences to gain impetus and you read and you do your research. We've created a bit tighter community with our educational programme, that we come together once a month. For a week we share our thoughts, we discuss shared thematics and in this sense sort of get closer. We do physical things together, even a teacher or a student does explore their own particular thing but we're trying to have this communal conversation and practice going on. And believe that in the end it produces, sort of by repetition and difference and impetus and effects.

CA: It's a condition for artistic research to be related to practice. You do not imagine anything else for artistic research and that strict connection to practice. Students engaging in Doctoral Programmes, they have to be practicing artists and their research then will be related to their personal artistic practice.

LR: It is related to that, but on the Doctoral-level what we think it's no longer about developing your personal practice. It is about exploring your practice in order to benefit the field or society. So, in that sense you're taking your practice to a new level. Of course you develop and change, but it's not only about this "my project". But it's about understanding how does my project relate to the context in which we live and in best cases, how does it produce ethical, political ways of dealing with challenges.

CA: The relation to society is always somewhere.

LR: That's what we try to support. It's not an easy question.

CA: Do you think that it is a particularity of artistic research? I put the things like this: for a long time we have had Doctorates in the arts already. In visual arts, in performance arts, but now recently we are - I don't know if this is just a detail, but - we are having doctoral courses that have the name artistic research on it. For example, you have the TAhTO that is a Doctoral Program in Artistic Research specifically; here in Theater Academy we also have Doctoral courses called Doctoral Studies in Artistic Research and Performance Art.

LR: Our program is officially The Doctoral Program in the Performing Arts in Artistic Research.

CA: So, the artistic research is there again.

LR: Overall that is what the research that we do at the Theatre Academy is. What distinguishes it between BA's and simply art practice is that there is also an interest in knowledge. So it's not only developing art by doing art, there has to be this reflection and the articulative side. There is always a use, a purpose, a political agenda with knowledge that it is produced for some reason, for some aims and goals. And that sort of is what makes it different from simple art practice.

CA: Exactly.

LR: Art at the moment in general is quite conceptual, quite explorative, quite investigative in its nature, art builds systematic ways of doing. And how does artistic research differ from this kind of artistic practice that has this investigative and conceptual, or even theoretical interest? We think that this knowledge parts is something that comes in and then you remain around one problem from four to six years. It makes a difference. Artists might of course use their own methods, but they have one project and they concentrate on this issue there and then they have another project and concentrate on a different issue. When you set out doing artistic research, you're setting out exploring a problem for quite a few years.

CA: In some cases also makes me think of artistic research as a discipline.

LR: That's what we actually call it. A research discipline.

CA: But what is the kind of expertise, for example, that comes out? Or what is the object of study of artistic research? This, for me, is problematic in two ways. Because in the one side, I see artistic research related to practice and I think that it is the desirable way for it to be. But on the other way, I've seen some examples, perhaps not so good examples, of artistic research falling in a kind of epistemological trap. It's like as if they are always trying to say what artistic research is and then this becomes the subject of artistic research, the object of study of artistic research itself. Because if I turn into myself and then I try to understand who I am, what I'm doing and I don't see around. You have these two positions, I think one is desirable and one is not so interesting. But as a discipline, when I think of artistic research as a discipline, I sometimes fear that it can become this other example of epistemological trap. For example, imagine the discipline in a Faculty where the teacher or the students constantly deal with 'how should be academic writing?' or 'what is artistic research?', the rules of artistic research, criteria assessment. This kind of things.

LR: Exactly. These kinds of anthologies and books on artistic research are problematic exactly because of this vision. They don't go and explore what is done as artistic research.

CA: Yes.

LR: We have 15, 20 Doctorates in artistic research, what is actually done there it's two pages that people reflect, comment upon their approach to artistic research. And then they go on about the actual project or process that they have been involved in. And, I think, we are past this phase of determining what artistic research is.

CA: Here in Helsinki?

LR: I think so.

CA: Yes.

LR: It is. It exists. It just simply is. And now we are more in the phase of exploring distinct ways people do and the effects that it has. And it was, of course, important to have the conversation of what artistic research is, in order to implement it on academic levels. The different organizations need an understanding, reasoning as to why to start funding or opening programs around it. But I think that phase is sort of over. And what we are actually producing, I think is a new field. People who come out from here are artist researchers, they have a dual expertise and I think that their skills of articulation they are useful in the field. They are sort of multitask. They are artists, but they can work as curators, they can work as commentating experts, they can produce reflection on what's going on.

CA: Why is there this huge interest of the art world or why are so many artists now enrolling in PhD's and getting engaged in artistic research?

LR: The hybridity that is going on in the field and the market situation. I think there is a pressure on artists to find ways of answering this consumer culture, this liberal capitalism and to find new ways of dealing with being an artist. And this, of course, at least our institution is a place where you can truly experiment, You don't have the production demands of having to follow a schedule or a certain kind of format in order to be able to produce your art, which affects the contents of the art. That's one reason, I think. But, of course, another reason is that this has become an interesting environment, because there start to be programs like this, people start to acknowledge that something is being done here. What is it and is it really something that can promote your career or arts in general?

CA: But still don't you feel that there is, for the one side, a lot of excitement going on, and artists are looking for this new field of knowledge or production, but at the same time, don't you feel that still there is kind of a fear of institutionalization? Like, well, 'I'm entering the

academy again and what does this mean for my work and for my practice? Will it be diminished? Will it be challenged?'.

LR: Will I lose my artistic practice? Yes, yes. There are tensions. Will I belong to the field anymore? There are tensions in the field that they still do not want to acknowledge. Some welcome, some don't. The field fears that the things are developed in a direction that the members in the field can't handle or that we are taking funding from them that should be directly put to them. In Finland, the funding organizations luckily are different. There are certainly tensions like these. Yes. And who am I after doing this? Where is my environment?

CA: Yes.

LR: And there is no clear answer. We are pioneers. We are building the environment; we are building the conversation and the tensions.

CA: You feel like being pioneers actually, yeah.

LR: This institution is, has been and continues to be a pioneer.

CA: That's interesting. Do you feel also that artistic research is having an impact in the art world?

LR: Yes.

CA: For example, in how things are going in contemporary art. Do you think that's being somehow influenced by...

LR: Contemporary art festivals in the performing arts are very performance studies oriented at the moment. They often have lectures as part of the program. This has been going on for 5 years. I think we have, at least, partly influenced this fact that there is interest in conversation, concepts, theories around art practice, as well as art practice itself.

CA: So then, perhaps, the artist-as-researcher can somehow be the new subjectivity of the contemporary artist following the artist-as-producer or the artist-as-curator and like a new trend or something like that.

LR: Yes, I think so.

CA: And then there is this thing about the Venice Biennale and the Research Pavilion as well.-

LR: Yes

CA: So, this probably is really taking shape somehow. Ok. Tutke is having there some students from here?

LR: Yes, we are.

CA: I'm very curious to see how things here will develop.

LR: As we are too. (laughs)

CA: Because it's constructing discursivity in the field as well, right?

LR: Yes.

CA: Simo [Kellokumpu] told me that - I think it is him, you, Saara [Hannula] and Esa [Kirkkopelto], and I don't know if someone else - you are preparing a new programme, smaller scale here in Theatre Academy, intended for artists that want to engage in artistic research, but not in years-length, like PhD.

LR: It's already in the curriculum; is already done for the MA students, they have optional evolutionary studies. We created an MA course, but in the credit course, we are thinking if it could be opened in the Open University for people from the field to learn about artistic research and tools of artistic research that they might then utilize on their own. And then, an additional thing is that Simo [Kellokumpu] and Saara [Hannula] have established an interlink between the academy and the field. They want to promote a society for artistic research that is open for art practitioners to sort of inform back and forth. This has been our idea at Tutke to try to promote the interaction between the field and the programme. Simo [Kellokumpu] is already giving a reading circle at Zodiak New Center.

CA: I first came to Helsinki because I was somehow curious about TAhto group. That's what first caught my attention and then from there, I came to Theatre Academy, and KuvA. You are also a part of the board in TAhto, I think.

LR: Yes.

CA: In the description of the PhD or Doctoral Course, they say that beyond the outcomes of being researchers and degrees, they say also that they are interested in new methodologies and new pedagogies and in what they call or you call good practices of artistic research, for example. And now we are reaching the end of the first edition of TAhto in December, I

guess. Do you feel that you are in condition now, after this period of 4 years, to say how artistic research should be conducted, assessed, publicized? I'm just sort of quoting the intentions of the programme.

LR: Annette [Arlander] is doing an evaluation of what has worked by interviewing and analyzing the 4 years. Now she is starting in the Spring, so that hasn't come out yet. What emerged was that collaboration was really important and students started collaborating amongst themselves, testing different kinds of improvisatory or other forms of work and this has been inspirational for their work. So that has been really important. The idea was that the students with their interests are given freedom and support to organize the different events and this has worked, I think, quite nicely, but it's also been quite tedious, and a lot of work to pull the different strings together. And I think this partly means that we would need more coordinator support in that work and that it's not always easy to find shared opinions as how to arrange an event. While all that has been going on, there has been, I think, a shift in artistic research here, but then I noticed it also elsewhere. We're trying to promote students to explore performative, what we call performative arrangements. So, different formats of presenting your artistic research. Performance lectures, video documentary. And at the same time we managed to establish an internet based publishing system for our Doctorates and the first one came out. So it has texts, video, sound and it's on the internet. And this was quite a job to do, because PhD research needs to be archived, it needs to be locked, you can't change it afterwards, so we created this kind of a system. And another thing that has emerged, which was earlier and then it was lost a bit and has come back, I think is the performative arrangements in relation to articulating the reflective dimension, the discursive dimension. We're back into creative writing, finding alternative means of articulating different perspectives on the practice. These sort of have emerged partly due to TAhto, partly as a shared ongoing process to intervene in the past 4 years.

CA: How did you get to the idea of experimenting with this program of TAhto? You are doing interesting work in Theatre Academy regarding the artistic research and PhD's, also in KuvA, and then TAhto comes from the idea of someone, is it public money that you have to apply?

LR: I think it was the funding. It's no longer possible, but then there still was a system at the Academy of Finland, which is the country's research council, that you could apply for doctoral schools, which offered to fund doctoral students, like graduate schools. One of the doctoral schools that we were, as a network school, we were involved with was closed. And then there

was this idea that we should establish a new one. This is Esa's [Kirkkopelto] initiative, a new doctoral graduate school and especially focusing on artistic research. So far there was none. There were people involved in the performing arts on research school or the digital media research school. Some were doing artistic research, not all. To have a graduate school it needed to be a network.

CA: It was a condition?

LR: Yes. It was a condition for the funding, so it needed to involve different universities and when it started out, we were a different university. Between the Fine Arts and the Sibelius Academy and the Theatre Academy, we all had independent university statuses. And then also the Aalto, of course, so that's how it was set up.

CA: I said that I'm aware that you are working in artistic research, and collaboration, and cognitive forms and some pedagogies.

LR: Embodiment phenomenology thematics.

CA: Yes. And If I asked you to describe your artistic practice first and then to describe your artistic research practice in a second moment, would that be different or you really feel that you are doing...

LR: If I would do it in words, the first would answer for the second as well. And then for the second the practice part I would have to stand up [Leena Rouhiainen stands up] and do something physically. Collaborate.

CA: For how long is this work here in Theatre Academy, the PhD in artistic research, going on?

LR: Since 1991 you were allowed to do a Doctorate at the Theatre Academy, or 1989... either, but about that. And the first Doctor was Annette Arlander in 1998. But then we had two different degrees. We had the scientific degree and the artistic degree. But since 2007 when we formed Tutke, we were bringing all the doctoral students together in one unit, but all of our research has been artistic research. Previously our doctoral students were involved in the department, in the MA program departments and now the doctoral students no longer are with the MA program, they are in Tutke. So we have choreography, dance, pedagogy.

CA: All the students in the PhD are also researchers at Tutke. There is an overlapping of positions.

LR: They are all in Tutke.

CA: Ok.

LR: So there is a 20 year, **or** more than 20 year tradition, but the specific focus on artistic research started in 2007. You could do an artistic research from 1990s on as well, but then you also could do scientific research. But now you can only do artistic research.

CA: And for any reason, 2007, to the shift for artistic research?

LR: Artistic research became stronger and then the doctoral students were unhappy with the way the scientific discourse was dominating the work, I think. So we heard them then and then was a shift. Which I think is a really good shift that no scientific work here, but it can be done elsewhere.

SAARA HANNULA

Performance artist and doctoral student at Aalto University

10.02.2015, 12h30 @ TeaK hall esplanade, Helsinki, Finland

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Catarina Almeida: How did you find it was a good idea to engage in or to enroll in a PhD?

Where does come your interest in artistic research in general?

Saara Hannula: Well, I consider myself as a very research minded person in general. Like, that's how I approach life and that's how I approach my artistic practice. That's always been the case. So, I think it's not true for me to construct research processes and create themes for them and so it feels like, from that perspective, like a natural continuation for me to engage with work within an institutional frame and to have a framework for what I'm doing. So there is this sort of shared structure for the research process that I would be doing anyway. Also the fact that I can engage in a particular research process which I have to formulate in the forehand. I have to formulate my research questions and then follow them, and I have to be somewhat disciplined about it. I think it helps me that I can delve deeper into something for a longer time. And then I also have external perspectives or I can get outside help, or have others who can comment, or support, or direct me in the process.

CA: It's like you are looking for the structure of the community. Your colleagues and supervisor and staff. But were you somehow looking for particularly artistic research or you were mostly interested in doing a PhD or Doctoral course in artistic practice?

SH: Well, I wanted it practice based. It was important for me that the Doctoral program would be practice based or, that is practice led research. Of course that formulation is different in every university, so the way they articulated it is different. But it was important that I would be able to do that and that I could also get some support while doing it because it's not very clear for me, or it wasn't and still isn't. So how I...

CA: Probably never will!

SH: It will never be (laughs). Yes. What does that mean and how do you practice and research? And academic research becoming intertwined and so on, so on.

CA: How did you start together with Simo [Kellokumpu] thinking about this platform that is ArcaHelsinki? You have that there written something like 'Arca is selecting discussions between the artistic research doctorate students in the University of The Arts Helsinki. Arca's function is not reduced to academic artistic research only. Arca proposes to operate as a coupling platform between academic artistic research and the arts field'. And I would like to stay here, because you are, somehow, mentioning two realities as if separate realities – the art world and the academic artistic research. And from my point of view, I think that the most interesting formulations of artistic research are intimately connected to the art world.

SH: Yes, yes.

CA: So, what is your idea here of artistic research when you propose it to be something that is in principle not connected to the art world?

SH: Actually, my experience with it is that it is intimately connected, like everything that I'm doing. There is no separation really. Well, we are kind of rewriting or formulating the articulation or the description of the platform constantly so, for example, we rewrote it yesterday. I don't know which day this is from, but... (laughs)

CA: Some days ago. (laughs)

SH: Because it's very new and... But it's an interesting question. So Simo [Kellokumpu] wrote that. I didn't write it, but it's interesting how that formulation comes to be and why one would think that in the first place. And I think there is sort of an existing paradigm or way of thinking, especially in the field of artistic research, which is separate. And then there this is anxiety about disconnecting from the field. I think it's an institutional phenomenon. I don't have the experience yet because I'm very, like, fluid and my activities are, like ... I'm very networked and so, all of the things that I'm doing and, for example, the working groups that I'm in and the people that I'm doing the research with, they are not artist researchers. I connect through multiple points to processes that are also happening in the field and, of course, I'm also collaborating with different kinds of organizations that are part of the art field, that are not connected to academic research only. So my experience with it was like that there is no separation. But, for example, Simo [Kellokumpu] has spoken about it, that he feels like this, that there is this divide. That somehow he's becoming more and more, not maybe isolated, but that he's in his own realm when he is doing artistic research. And then there's less connection with what is happening in the field. It's also a question of how we perceive the field, but where is the field? And then what is the center of the field and what kind of things

can you count into the field? And maybe, from what he has said, maybe there is this sort of feeling that there's the field of dance, for example, or choreography, which is organized around a tradition, or a sense of what that means. And then he's reading it and maybe the divide comes from that. But I don't have that kind of experience. I don't construct my relationship with the art world around that axis or that division of my field. The research process that I would be in and all the things that I'm interested in would be somehow different from what he is going in the field. Because I feel like whatever I'm doing or researching is like a very central theme in the field, so... It has to do with the research interest, like what kind of topic or how am I researching it and do I feel like an outsider or not?

CA: Well, from not long ago, now there are some PhD's or programmes in arts education, post degrees that are getting the name artistic research on them. TAhTO is a doctoral course of artistic research, then here the PhD also has the name artistic research, there's a master in Holland and elsewhere that have artistic research there... Teachers that call themselves: "I'm a teacher of artistic research". So, what do you think if there might be something different in the conception of what is the object? Because this makes us think of artistic research as a discipline, as a disciplinary field and what is the kind of the object of study of artistic research in itself? Is it different from a research in a PhD in Visual Arts and Performance where it is not so objective as to explicitly connect the field to artistic research, for example. Do you think that there might be some interest in stressing that artistic research practice is somehow different?

SH: Well, very different to what?

CA: It's like, for example... You have the possibility to engage in different PhD's. You could, for example, do a PhD in painting or a Doctoral course in painting, or sculpture, or photography. And you have this, for example, TAhTO, that is a Doctoral program in artistic research. So, what is the object? Is it different?

SH: Is it the motivation or, objective or ... What did you mean by the object?

CA: I mean the object of study. I mean the core of the discipline. Do you think that artistic research, from this point of view, as a disciplinary field may be somehow interested or concerned with some kind of inquiries or particularities, different from the other perspectives of doing research in visual arts or performance, but not calling it artistic research? Some aspects that these other cases dismiss, for example. Because, and just to complete this, in a conference about artistic research in November, in Porto, we were

discussing this formulation of PhD's and all that stuff, and one of the guest speakers said that designing a PhD is not a task for artists, but perhaps it is a task for artist researchers. For me it's very problematic to think like this.

SH: Well, I mean, this whole thing, of course, depends on the definition of artistic research, which I don't want to get into (laughs). It's somehow the job of the institutions to define it as a concept but of course I can look at it from my own perspective and see what it means for me and how it would be different. Like how I understand the difference from my own perspective, or relate it with how I'm dealing with it. Maybe there are two points to look at. For example, the process of art making from the inside, like what is art but not so much looked at from space, but rather from inside where the practice is happening. So it's a different way of constructing the view and looking at the subject of study somehow. It's also a different methodology, because the research methods are different from those used in academic research. Of course there are different hybrids and combinations but I think it's quite essential that part of the practice is a way of researching. My artistic methods are research methods. So, it's not that I would do something and then I would research it through academic methods, or those that have been established in, for example, other universities besides art universities. But I create methods of research while doing it. So, I think that is quite important and of course that changes, like the method of research completely changes what kind of research is being done and what comes out of it. So maybe that will be the central point of view.

CA: Do you feel afraid of institutionalization? These discussions regarding artistic research at some point always fall into people being afraid of getting institutionalized, artists being afraid of the institution. There are risks, from your point of view, or do you feel if there are any risks at all?

SH: I think all of the structures that we are engaged in or work in on every day, they change our way of being and the way you look into things, and they kind of construct our way of being in relation to the world and what we regard as important, for example. So I don't think that there's a particular risk in that sense, for a community or an institution, especially if I am aware of that effect, aware of the effect that it has on me. Then I can also be constructed in different ways and choose to modify it in my own ways, for example. Like being aware of how I do this research, what kind of relationship do I develop with the institution that I'm working in. Again it relates to this question of the field and the institution. How do the other things that I'm engaged in come in and to what extent do they affect me? And how am I subjected to the

structures of the institutions? I don't think I'm anymore worried about it than I would be worried about anything else, like being subjected to something or being regulated...

CA: The art world itself is also institutionalized.

SH: Yes. I've just began, so I haven't become all grey yet. I think in that sense that I feel that the field is wide open for me and I don't feel it as a limiting thing. The institution is there to give me a structure that I can work against also, and that I can articulate my point of view against. And then I can understand what I actually think about things. But it's interesting that I've noticed, for example, that now that I'm still very fresh and so I don't have a very structured sense of what kind of discourses I'm engaging with, then I can counter articulate it. I've noticed situations, for example, where the institutions suddenly take shape. If we have a conversation about experiences that we've had, like, artistic experiments or something, I have my own way of articulating the experience, or I have my own interests. For example, through what Esa [Kirkkopelto] is saying or how he's articulating the experience, there the institution takes shape. That some ways of articulating experiences are more dominant than others, also, because they are based in existing discourses and traditions of thinking. And then... Because I'm kind of, at least slightly innocent in relation to how I am articulating things. I explain things the way I feel them and it's not maybe based on a certain already established articulation. So there I think I can feel an intimate contact. And now the institution is coming in the form of a hierarchy or in a hierarchical sort of organization of knowledge, and then my knowledge is not as relevant as someone else's would be.

CA: That's interesting. Most of the time you've those people that find that institutionalization is a limiting situation. But then, I think it's exactly what you said, you can take all these regulations and all this power and relations, and turn this into kind of a crisis situation, and transform it into a very creative potential situation. It actually depends on the way you act, but it's very important to be aware of all the subjectivations that go on in such places. Why is that art is so interested in the academy today?, so that artists are coming and applying to, and looking for PhD's in artistic research now.

SH: Yes, I don't know...

CA: You are looking for a structured writing and for a structured dialogue.

SH: It depends. In the scene that I work in, or among the people that I'm engaged with, this is a very typical phenomenon. They easily gravitate towards research. But I think it is also because I'm engaged with people who are also like me, like research minded in a way. For example, I've

been working in this collective called The Reality Research Centre for about ten years. Already in the name and in the structure of the collective there is this idea of artistic research. But it's just formulated in a different way, because it's not constructed to this academic idea of research. In there the idea of research is much more free, but then it's obvious that if people engage in such structure, they already have a certain approach, or they have an interest in this continuity and an analytical approach towards things, and are developing systematic methods, like becoming aware of how we work. And so I think that's one of the reasons why there is sort of a density of potential artistic research in the field that I'm in. And also people who want to be a part of the institution. So it's hard for me to say in general why there is this gravitation. Of course I can guess. A part of the problem, or the issue, is probably this precariousness of the field that is tiring to be a freelancer forever, and to engage in these endless small projects that keep changing. So I think that part of the phenomenon is probably this desire to have a more secure, or at least a somewhat continuous frame.

CA: They are trying to become teachers or to enroll in projects that are somehow collaborating with university?

SH: Maybe. And then also the time perspective is different when you do research. It's a long term commitment for at least 5 years. For many is 10 years. So then the time perspective changes. I don't know what kind of hopes or expectations people have when they engage in an artistic research program. Do they expect their role to be different when they come out, like, to be a researcher or to be a teacher? What is the expectation? I think many probably don't have it or at least many of the people that I know, or most of them, don't have any kind of a goal. They just want to do this research, but there's not an established goal behind. Like, 'I want to have an academic career'. Whereas my image of other universities, not artistic ones, is that people really aim for the career of the researcher. That this is why they want to engage in academia. But I don't think that this is the case with us. Most of us will probably not be engaged in research afterwards. But, of course, it's hard to say. So, I don't know. I don't think I have a singular answer.

CA: Do you think that artistic research is having an impact in the art world? I mean as if these artist researchers would be the way to be an artist in 21th century. After the artist-as-curator and artist-as-producer, you have now the artist-as-researcher. And after the linguistic term and all these things comes this researcher term, or whatever you want to call it. Do you think this is not occurring just like a parallel thing, but also is actually having an impact in the art world?

SH: I think it definitely has an impact, but what that impact is it's not for me to say.

CA: You are aware of this thing in the Venice Biennale, the Research Pavilion...?

SH: Yes, I noticed it. Yes.

CA: It was an event of Aalto [University] as well?

SH: No, it's just the University of the Arts, but I noticed that it exists. And it's interesting. Because in a way I would consider research as a marginal area, so it's in the center and that also redefines the position of research. But then research also becomes visible in a different way, and then it kind of flaps into the frame where art is being the art market. I think it has an effect, but I don't know what kind of an effect it would have.

CA: Yeah, but surely, if you take this into account it's undeniable that something is going on. You know, it's the Biennale of Venice!

SH: Yes.

Speaker1: You are somehow interested, let's say, in overpassing these pre-existing categories of being and doing, and you're suggesting new events so that they generate new subjectivities. I guess that this is the process, I think. And how would you describe it in your practice, if I asked in your practice as an artist first, and then if I asked you to re-describe it in your practice as an artistic researcher.

SH: Well, that would be difficult (laughs). So if you asked me. Not suggesting that you will, but...

CA: I won't! If I asked you this first, then the other, would that be different? Or things are so entangled that you have not to distinguish it?

SH: It's hard to distinguish but I would say that my way of articulating it has changed already because I'm a researcher. I look in this framework and it, for example, changes my language in the way I articulate. It might be because the way I articulate things and that I contextualize what I'm doing. The kind of language that I use to describe the processes that I'm engaged in on my practice, I think it is heavily influenced by the context that I'm in. The language that I use, for example, the word 'subjectivity', I don't think I would have used it two years ago.

CA: Ok. So, you're becoming institutionalized.

SH: Yes, in that sense. But it's not only about the institution. Again I'm influenced equally by the frameworks that I happen to be in. This effect is not particular to the institution, but, also to the other circles or scenes that I'm in, and what kind of things are being talked about, and how people are articulating their practice and how I articulate my own practice in relation to that. So, of course, when I articulate something or communicate something it's always in response to something. So, I'm not communicating in a vacuum. So my communication is dependent on what else is being communicated and how it's communicated. And these languages are constructing each other in a way. Does it make sense?

CA: Yes.

SH: So I think all the conversations that I have, whether they happen here or elsewhere, they mold the way I see my practice. I think this is largely a matter of context. What kind of processes am I actually engaged in when I make this kind of art or develop this kind of practice? And I don't have a practice that would stay the same. Maybe other people have a more sustained practice, but this is what I always do. I can imagine some people saying that they have a very, very sustained, a certain way of practicing art, but I don't have that. So, it always happens in relation to whatever else is happening, and it's context specific in that sense that I also modify my practices. Of course, I can see that developing this kind of embodied practices it's a practice that I have. And it's sort of independent of context, but then I modify the way it's being done or the way it connects to other practices or phenomenon, depending on the context. So it's relational in that sense.

CA: In the case that this institution disappears... do you think that all these things that you have collected here for a practice will go on or somehow you'll just stop doing what you do, stop saying 'subjectivity', for example, or is it something that you have gained here and you will use nonetheless?

SH: Yes, of course. Yes. I mean, I'm a very like... how could I describe it? Like an animal that integrates everything that she sees and experiences or everything that I go through. Like all the courses, they influence me heavily. And that I immediately integrate them into my own practice. So they are inseparable from what I'm doing and of course some are more relevant than others. It's interesting to think that if all these institutions disappear from the face of the earth, then what would happen? Would I still use the word subjectivity or not? (laughs) What would be the motivation? How would people speak differently then?

CA: You have said that you are networked. You said to have been working in groups. Most of your work is kind of collaborative work.

SH: Yes, all of it.

CA: All of it. These things like collaboration, networking, interdisciplinarity and so on, have become kind of buzzwords in the art world and also in artistic research. Of course that I see also the creative potential in them, of course that's not the point, but do you have also a critical point of view on them? Because you can always approach them to the point of view that they are somehow resulting from this capitalist or immanent capitalism, and then they have become subjectivities or *ethos* in the artistic practice. So you have these two situations. How do you deal with it in your work? There is a risk sometimes and, it happens quite often actually, that the collaboration is confused and it becomes not the way to reach something or it becomes...

SH: Like opportunistic in a way?

CA: Sometimes, yes. Like: 'Ok, this project is a collaborative project'. Yes, and so what? Sometimes I feel that in some projects it's lost the aim of collaboration. It's like their own aim was to be a collaboration. But then what is the predicate of this collaboration?

SH: Yes. Well, how to answer it is a very important question.

CA: Probably I'm not putting it very easily or very explicit.

SH: It's quite complex. First of all I would say that I have always collaborated, so I have never had a practice of my own. If you think that the natural state of having an artistic practice is to work alone, then collaboration is sort of an exception and you collaborate in order to something. You collaborate or network in order to get an exhibition somewhere. I think it's a very different attitude from having that at the basis of the practice, like, if the practice in itself is already collaborative, as if it could not happen alone. I think it's quite different. My experience is that I work collaboratively because of the topics that I'm interested in. The topics are about relational ways of being and how to work, how to be, how to perceive oneself as an always relational and interconnected being, so this is the topic. So then that also involves the ways of working. So it's less meaningful to work in an isolated setting than to research these things with others. And so I think it's quite typical for me that the method of research is also the topic, and vice-versa. I try to translate whatever I'm doing into the ways of working and into the structures of working, so it happens on every level. But I also notice that there is this

desire or, somehow inbuilt exhaustive need to network or to be connected. It's maybe an artificial dichotomy to think about the modern artists who would be in the studio. The experiences and whatever he is doing is emerging from his own experiential world, like the art would come from within, which I think it is fake, but. Or you can think of the artists whose work happens almost only through this contextualization of being in the art market or that everything you do is defined by these relations or networked connections, that either are there or it could become, it could emerge if you do this or this. So, I think the basic model of how we construct ourselves as artists has changed in the past decades. I can notice that oscillation between not wanting to withdraw and wanting to, and rely on myself somehow, not being so concerned about what's going on and how I should formulate my own artistic practice in relation to the trends, for example.

CA: This is an important topic for artistic research in particular, because I sometimes have the feeling that this collaboration and networking and interdisciplinarity have become at some point strategies for these artist researchers to engage in artistic practice. As if it was the way that they have found to have a legitimized practice. If you collaborate with scientists you'll have this kind of practice in the art world. If you collaborate with such an institution like this, well, you automatically will, you know... There are sometimes disguised interests in the collaboration thing. For example, TAhTO, which was funded because it's a networked programme, and otherwise it couldn't get funds. So it's quite mandatory. If you network, you'll be successful with your collaboration. This somehow is shaping artistic research also.

SH: The grant foundations that fund our work, they have kinds of prioritizations and formulations as to what kind of work they prefer. Of course, so we kind of reconstruct our working processes so that they fit the expectation. I don't know if you know this, but last Friday there was this 12 Hours in the Art World, a kind of a seminar thing, but it was in Finnish, so... But it's super related to this kind of things and there were representatives from different kinds of institutions, and also from artistic research, but also from museums, and galleries, and students, and staff, and curators, and gallery owners. So they spent 12 hours imagining speeches and dialogues and panel discussions on these topics and that was one of the themes that were discussed there. Like this sort of, like, how the formulations and prioritizations that... And also the recurring question was this instrumentalization of art that, maybe everywhere, but I Finland there is this very big discourse around the instrumentalization of art and how art is only justified or funded if it's somehow used for social purposes. And then people react, of course, like against this and fight for that sort of integrity of art as such. This is an ongoing discussion in Finland.

CA: Ok, yes. I didn't know that.

SH: Yes, it's very topical here because of the funding structures. There are also these new grants coming up which are particularly focused on art conducted, or artistic practices situated in care. How do you call them in English, these institutions of care like hospitals, or elderly homes, or prisons. In many grants there is this emphasis on social practices and it shapes us in a very big way.

CA: One has to be critical, otherwise...

SH: Yes. But it's hard to. A lot of that process is also unconscious. It's not just that I become opportunistic, that I formulate consciously or try to fake, but I also start being interested in those kinds of approaches. So suddenly I'm doing that kind of art and the kind of feeling that comes from my own motivations, so it's hard to separate the external from the internal motivations.

CA: So, the name of your PhD is...?

SH: Well, it has also shifted. I applied with one, which was like hellish. The title was "Fields of Potential from Effective Environments to Practices of Living". And now I've rewritten the proposal several times but it hasn't become fixed. But then I also applied for Tutke.

CA: Yes, I was asking why are you changing your mind.

SH: It is the same topic, but I just formulated it differently and it is called "Performance: Reality and Potentiality". So it's like the same, but formulated in a different way, which is, of course, interesting. And part of the why is probably that I... Well, there are like honest and dishonest answers to this question. (laughs).

CA: No, if you want I switch this off!

SH: No, no, no. It's fine, it's fine. Nothing is sacred anyway ... My sense of what I want to be researching is alive. It's not very fixed in general. I have a field of ways of working and topics, and practices that I engage in. I know what they are or I see what kind of things I am particularly developing and what kind of questions I would want to be looking at, but they can be framed in many ways. And so, the original formulation was ... If you think that there's an undefined field, and then you can frame it and then it becomes packaged. So it was one kind of a package and then I constructed another package. And I think a part of it was influenced by the sort of institution, because I'm in a different institution, so it makes sense to formulate the

research questions somewhat differently. I wrote the original one in January last year and then there has been quite a lot of moments in my own thinking since then, so when I reformulated it sounded much different. I wanted to articulate it differently, so a part of it is just a natural development. Even though I am somehow mentally back at the old in a way, but I'm still sticking to the new one, so I'm not kind of shifting back or that I'm holding on to the formulations that I found when I was applying here. Even the University has certain kinds of research areas, for example, which they usually do when they have their defined being, like, the name, lines of research and 'this is what we expect from the applicants'. And, of course, the applicants then formulate research proposals, so that they fit those curricula and then what's interesting in the Theatre Academy is that they also direct already the application process, they direct the proposal and frame it, reframe it, help the applicant to reframe it, so that it fits their interests somehow. This is at least what was explained to me by someone who has applied here, that the institution chooses out of a pallet that the applicant is sort of presenting, and they're in a way choosing also what is interesting for them as an institution and so they direct the interests of the person towards a certain direction. And some applicants are just, like, better researchers than others, but of course the institution has their own interests and topics, and some are more relevant and some are less, so this is an interesting process, I think. How does the institutional frame and what the overall discursive field, how do they influence the choices that are being made and the research that is being done?

CA: Of course. That's another topic. And so, you found the name of the Doctoral studies in Aalto?

SH: Yes. Aalto is a very big institutional mess. The names of programs are shifting all the time.

CA: Yes, that's probably why I didn't find the information.

SH: Yes. It's completely...

CA: I was from ne page to the other page and then at the first page also and again and I couldn't find anything.

SH: So, this: 'Doctoral program in Arts, Design and Architecture', which comes from the School of Arts, Design and Architecture.

CA: Everything that goes in the area of the arts...

SH: ... It happens as a part of this program. I'm in the Department of Art. Different Doctoral students they belong to different departments.

CA: The responsible professor is Juha Varto?

SH: Yes. He is the responsible professor for my PhD.

ATO MALINDA

Visual artist, performer, and PhDArts student

24.03.2015, 14h30 @ KABK auditorium antechamber, The Hague, The Netherlands

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Catarina Almeida: So I went to the PhDArts page and of course I checked your profile and I saw that you studied art history and molecular biology?

Ato Malinda: (Laughs) Yes.

CA: And I was just wondering if you were since the beginning kind of looking for this interdisciplinary *ethos*?

AM: No. Actually it's a personal story which I don't mind telling. My father wanted me to be a doctor and I didn't want to, so I began undergrad with molecular biology and then I switched to art history as a compromise and not studio art.

CA: So you switched. You weren't learning two things at the same time?

AM: No, no.

CA: And does the study of molecular biology have any kind of impact in your artistic practice?

AM: It has more impact I think on my daily life than it does my actual art practice because I don't necessarily work with science. There are a lot of artists that are scientific in their practice and I wouldn't say that I'm one of those artists actually.

CA: So there is nothing about this interdisciplinary thing?

AM: No, there really isn't in my work, no. It's very humanities my work.

CA: In the same profile I also check that you have this video called in French "*on fait ensemble*". In English is something like "*maybe together*"?

AM: "We do it together". But it's a play on the colloquialism in West Africa. I spent some time in Cameroon, West Africa and when you meet a friend or an acquaintance you say "on-et ensemble?". Like "are we together?". And so I did some research on a feminine water spirit when I had residency there. I was already looking at the nature of the hybrid nature of identity

in African societies and so I sort of came up with this with this phrase “on fait ensemble” meaning that, it’s an insinuation that in the twenty-first century Africans are building the continent together.

CA: I’m once again picking up the *ethos* thing. It has nothing to do, or it does, you tell me, about a collaborative *ethos*? You know, you have these words that have become buzzwords in contemporary art and artistic research: interdisciplinarity, networking, collaboration. Is this togetherness of “on fait ensemble” just a specific work of yours or do you in your work look for these collaborations?

AM: In what sense do you see a collaboration in “on fait ensemble”?

CA: Jus in the word: “ensemble”.

AM: Oh okay!

CA: That was why I was asking what does it mean?

AM: Okay. It wasn’t that I was literally collaborating with someone, although I worked with an editor. I don’t know that it is part of a wider *ethos* of contemporary art that I’m looking at. There are the buzzwords like identity and hybridity, but I feel like I can’t get away from that being of a generation that is examining themselves, especially a postcolonial generation in the twenty-first century on the African continent. So I know that doesn’t really answer your question but...I know a lot of artist collaborate in one way or another, and like I say, I usually work with an editor, although sometimes do the editing myself. But I rarely work in collaboration with other artists...producing work together.

CA: You’ve answered me in a sense. That you did not answer me “well, I work always in collaboration” for example, “this is part of my work, I don’t work alone, my works are all collaboration with artists, so I’m quite subjected to this thing of collaboration, to this thing of interdisciplinarity, or to this thing of hybridity”. It’s these buzzwords, which come from the neoliberal environment or its consequences. This is why I was asking you. Because then I will ask you how do you position yourself in face of these categories?

AM: Okay (laughs)!

CA: How do you envisage their existence in contemporary art in general? I will tell you my general opinion: of course there are exceptions, but I somehow feel, for example in the field

of artistic research, that the collaborative thing comes most of the time just as a means to legitimise projects. For example, in collaboration with science.

AM: Right...okay. But it seems to be the nature of art that I have struggled with in the past – the need for legitimization. I am sure I am not the only artist who has asked herself, what is the point of what I am doing? I tend not to work with science (but with sociology and anthropology), but this allows the artist to contextualize her work. It is possible that it is not just legitimization but also contextualization...circumventing art for art's sake.

CA: Yes.

AM: I do understand myself as an artist working in a neoliberal context. I think it's very interesting because it sort of speaks to my PhD project a little bit with the notion that looking at queerness in Nairobi and in African urban setting. The sort of mecca or the aspirations of a lot of queer Nairobians from a class perspective is a neoliberal world, and I'm questioning that, I'm wondering why is that, are those legitimate aspirations, is the West, is Europe and North America really a mecca and a haven for queerness and how does the image of queerness how is that proliferated to African cities. So I think it is like trying to situate myself within a neoliberal context. It is very interesting.

CA: Why did you choose this programme? Did you focus on the syllabus or were you interested in something in particular? What does it offer to you that other programmes do not offer? What were the other possibilities?

AM: I looked at the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna. In their PhD programme there's such a heavy leaning on queer theory so I thought it could be quite interesting to be a part of that programme. However, it became evident that this programme was a little bit more disciplined.

CA: This one?

AM: Yes, the one in The Hague. And I thought that's at least I felt that's what I needed, especially because my MFA was really quite unconventional - not that you can get a conventional art school... but actually you probably can (laughs)! Yes, I think you can! - So I kind of wanted something a little bit more disciplined, so this programme really worked for me. And then also on a personal matter: my girlfriend is Dutch and this where we want to settle, so it was a head start to my personal life as well.

CA: It's very interesting that you are mentioning that you needed a more disciplined programme, because most of the time when you ask artists what do they feel about being in

a PhD and in the academy, they go like 'It's a nightmare because I have to fulfill a lot of requirements that are nothing to do with art works or art practice'. I always wonder about this resistance to the academic institution. For example in the symposium last week, the invited speaker who is a photographer said many times things like, 'Well I was willing to do that thing, but then I changed my mind because I realised that I would be talking to an audience of scholars'.

AM: Right!

CA: Unfortunately I couldn't talk to him personally, but I am very interested in what is his idea of this thing. Who are these scholars? What is this identity of being a scholar? And then you are an artist and then you enroll in an academy: what do you become? An artist researcher, but then what is an artist researcher? How does this thing of being an artist researcher relate to being at the same time an artist and to be on the other hand a scholar? Is this starting to worry or concern you, given that you started not too long ago the programme?

AM: I'm actually quite an academic artist. And I know again you're asking 'well what does that mean?' (laughs)!

CA: Exactly!

AM: I think in those terms. It means that I spend a lot of my artistic life writing papers and, yes, not necessarily producing art works. But then again I spoke to Janneke [Wesseling] and she was saying that writing is just like producing art anyways. So maybe it's just another aspect of my practice. But so I do write non-academic and academic work. I curate, which isn't necessarily an art practice, but it is at the same time. I'm not necessarily an artist that is constantly in the studio producing what would be deemed artwork. So I thought actually that this would be quite a fulfilling endeavour for me, to do a PhD in artistic research. Artistic research is a difficult term.

CA: Do you have another proposal?

AM: To the term? What else I could call it? I would have to think about that (laughs).

CA: But again this is very interesting, and what Janneke told you as well, because I was also wondering if, in the near future when people look back and look at this time where we are now, there is any possibility that something like this thing of being an artistic researcher (or a better term that comes up) would be regarded as the way to be a contemporary artist in

this second decade of 2000. Like ‘contemporary art at that time was like this, artists were artist researchers or... Does artistic research have a significant impact in contemporary art, for example, or is it something that just goes parallel?

AM: I would say in a sense it does. Now that I think about it, I know some artists in Nairobi who research for their pieces, who actually go out and do the research. And it tends to be artists more who classify themselves as contemporary artists, whereas the sort of traditionalist artists who are painting and sculpting who possibly learn under, in an apprenticeship, don’t necessarily do any research, but sort of go day to day and produce the work like that, does that make sense?

CA: Yes, then what is this ‘doing research’? Because a lot of art making claims to be research based, and do it since a long-time, so it’s not really a new thing. Among artists there’s a general feeling, or a general knowledge, that art is something that is reflexive, something that you research to produce your work, unless you just close your eyes and throw the paint out or something. So this way it is always kind of research based, but then you have also this other position that claims that artistic research is something that is merely institution-like. You just talk of artistic research when you are in this context, like an academy. Artistic research only happens as an institutionalised thing, and the institution is the ontological condition of artistic research, which from one side eases the way you approach and study the topic.

AM: Yes but I don’t think that that’s the case in reality. I think that for me, personally, once I did my MFA I felt the point was to teach me how to research post-institution, once I had left the institution. Does that make sense?

CA: Yes... That’s other way.

AM: Yes. So you go to the institution to learn a method or methods, so that you can carry them out after you graduate. Wouldn’t that be the point of any academic programme? Unless it’s self-repeating and it is for you to stay in the institution and continue the research until you retire.

CA: This kind of cyclic thing?

AM: Yes.

CA: I’m sure it’s one of the weaknesses or contradictions of the whole thing of artistic research. I see this in two trends: one that I regard as a most desirable trend for artistic

research, and on the other hand something that, from my point of view, is a kind of technocratic approach in artistic research. That's when you have teachers that are teachers of artistic research and then ask them, 'So what do you teach?' And then sometimes they are like discussing things like regulations, academic writing, academic restraints...

AM: Really?

CA: There is this kind of artistic research that is always trying to define itself you know, always trying to understand what are we, who are we, what are we doing, what is artistic research? But then they never finish it, it never gets an accomplishment and most of the literature out there about artistic research is just this mere kind of speculation that leads to nowhere. They never reach a conclusion, and there's no courage to set limits, because you don't want to crystalize. At the same time you don't develop from this point of just trying to guess what artistic research is. And this is cyclic, you are sort of feeding the system, you are assuring a position in the faculty, or in the academy, or university, and at the same time you are just making money flow...

AM: But it is artistic research wholly theoretical or is there a practical element to it?

CA: In my opinion?

AM: Yes, in your opinion.

CA: In my opinion you have this trend that I have told you about just now, that is totally theoretical. And then you have this other one that is starting to develop in some programmes. It looks for this particular entanglement with the practice. You have to be a practicing artist so that you can reflect upon your practice, your doing, your making.

AM: That sort of makes sense to me (laughs).

CA: For me as well. But not a reflection only for your personal development, but in a way that you can start a conversation with your peers. So you have to be able to balance these two things, like you are an artist but at the same time you are inside an academy, and so you have to be concerned, to be aware that you have to make your work kind of shareable, or that you have to establish communication with other persons so you just can't enter the academy and do statements as an artist, in the same way you do in the art world...

This reminds me one commentary. There was this conference last year in November in Porto, that I organised. It was conveniently called *Conversations on Artistic Research* and we had an invited speaker, that is a well-known artist in Portugal, and is also a director of a PhD

in Contemporary Art, and he said something that made me think because I don't really agree with it. We were discussing these new programmes and how they are organised and he said, 'Well this is not a task for artists to discuss in a PhD. To define a PhD is a task for artistic research'. It was like putting artistic research on that technocratic trend...

AM: You're right.

CA: ... and leaving the thinking and the criticality about art to artists. Artistic researchers are like another species you know...

AM: So Janneke introduced you to me as someone who was previously an artist but now does artistic research, so is that not something that you ascribed to as being...?

CA: I'm not doing artistic research. I'm researching artistic research which is different. You will be doing artistic research.

AM: Right correct.

CA: But I'm not doing artistic research on my research.

AM: But I'm not doing artistic research quite exclusively. I'm practicing as well as doing artistic research.

CA: Okay.

AM: I'm just clarifying that you're not someone who thinks artistic research is separated from artists' work.

CA: It can't be, otherwise you're just engaging that cyclic thing nonsense. It's nonsense.

AM: Yes.

CA: Actually it makes a lot of sense, but for the neoliberal context. This is a big danger in what concerns artistic research. And this is also part of what I am interested in trying to understand when people like you engage in these programmes: how do they position themselves against these possibilities?

AM: I feel that's really interesting and I mean this is kind of what I'm battling with but on a more tangible level, which is queer individuals. I explained it earlier so yes, I think that's really interesting.

CA: Of course there is a background. I am interested in this thing because in the university where I come from, particularly the Faculty of Fine Arts, this discussion is now starting off. It goes on for about two decades or something in the Nordic countries, for example, but in Portugal I feel there is a huge not violent but silent kind of war between those artists in the academy – artists who are also teachers but who don't really identify themselves as teachers - and then a group of people interested in trying to see how these programmes, this thing of being a researcher for artists is working, what is happening and what is at stake. But the fact that we are interested and we are producing articles, and we are editing books, and we are dealing with media that are not exclusively visual, or sound based, or performative - we are dealing with language – is conflicting, because somehow this production of articles is also regarded as doing away with the purity of art, like you are becoming less artistic and you're somehow destroying the sacred field of art. It's not really what I would call a discussion, because there is a purpose in felt silence. For example, in this conference that I told you about, I invited some of the artists and the few invitations that I've done were just refused.

AM: So there's a tradition of the academy in Portugal? As it sounds, is there a tradition of that and people don't want to change?

CA: There is a tradition of the academy. Before we were not a faculty, we were a school and only in the 90s we became a faculty, and then we were attached to a university, and I think artists never felt very comfortable about that. There's this thing that about the autonomy that is gone. There is the obligation to report to other superior entities, teachers have to be evaluated and assessed... But then, when money is wanted, the way to obtain it is using the word 'research' on artistic projects. And since the word 'research' is there, money starts to flow. It is a funny thing. It is handy to be research minded if there's money coming to projects, but as money arrives then the research concern can eventually disappear. Of course this is a caricature, but more or less it portrays what goes on. Also there's the feeling that this is to be sort of *avant garde*, but to my view this is like just very Romantic.

AM: It is.

CA: As you've told and as I see now you are very concerned with this identity thing, the subjectivity thing, although you obviously are focusing on different issues, like sexuality and gender, post-colonialism, queerness, but still these are identity and subjectivity interests. When you think of the contemporary artists for example, what is the subjectivity that you would assign to a contemporary artist? Do you think that an artist and an artist researcher are different subjectivities? Would you give them different features or?

AM: It's difficult to sum up what a contemporary artist is and a lot of the time I don't know myself (laughs) what I'm doing with my life! I think maybe a contemporary artist is someone who's always questioning, there's no limit on what you can question.

CA: Sounds a lot like a researcher.

AM: Yes (laughs). I wouldn't say that they're very different if not actually the same. For me, the reason I'm doing this programme is because I feel like I can be both and that I am both, does that make sense?

CA: Do you feel at certain times kind of afraid of this thing of being institutionalized? Of course it would also be very naïf to think that there is nothing changing when you enter an institution. Of course you change somehow your practice and you'll change your vocabulary, sometimes, you'd use words that you wouldn't be using before you come to meet them in conversations, and in events. But artists tend to see this from the negative side, and I'm of course generalising, but do you sometimes, although you are a very comfortable with this thing of doing your PhD, also feel that you have to be aware of some of these restraints that the academy is imposing on you? Some of the regulations, some of the pressure. For example, you have a certain amount of rules that you have to obey to to do your dissertation. And it will, of course, affect your practice in what concerns the research you are doing here. So do you sometimes feel that you have to be more aware, like entering a dialogue with these regulations, like discussing them and negotiating them not only to subject yourself to them?

AM: I would assume so but I also don't worry about that so much (laughs)! I think just because in general I'm quite a laidback person and I wouldn't necessarily say that I'm an activist. I would say that an activist would be someone who maybe takes issue with institutional rules and stuff like this. But it does affect my practice, both for the good and for the bad.

CA: And what is for the bad for example?

AM: (Laughs) I guess it puts you deadlines, but deadlines are in the artistic world outside of academia anyways, so I guess in a sense, it works for me, and I don't know that I see a lot of bad things in. I'm still very new in this programme, but actually going back to school at a later stage and doing my MFA made me realise that I like the structure, and I think that actually has to do with initially having a scientific mind and needing something to say this is this and this is this and this is this and, yes, it's something that I actually benefit from.

CA: You are not ashamed to say that you are comfortable with the institution?

AM: I wouldn't say, but I don't see myself staying in an institution for the rest of my life.

CA: The rest of your life it's just too much time, but... at the moment you are in an institution.

AM: (Laughs) Yes, for the moment I'm comfortable with it. Yes, I am, and I'm not ashamed of it. I know a lot of artists are ashamed of saying something like that, but no, I'm not ashamed of it. In fact I'm very proud of the fact that I'm (laughs).

CA: And I think you should be. I'm starting to think like a scholar. Should I worry about it? (laughs).

AM: (Laughs) Well, maybe at the end of my PhD I'll have the fears that you're having. But do you still produce work?

CA: Well lately just minor things... because I did the bachelor, which was a longer bachelor. It was 5 years. Then I immediately engaged in the master, which is the regular master for you to become a teacher in high school. I did it, it took me three years and then immediately I'm engaging in the PhD. So it's just like being a professional student.

AM: Okay

CA: I am really becoming a scholar!

AM: How old are you?

CA: 29, almost 30. So, I was saying that I sometimes have this... Not that I am ashamed, because I'm not ashamed, but I feel like if I say out loud that I can't find what's so wrong about the institution - I mean with its regulation. It's an institution, why shouldn't it be regulated? -, people are like 'you have to find this very stressing! You have to be worried about it!'

AM: It's not for everyone. I think it's if you know that it's for you, that it works for you, then do it for you. You know if it doesn't work for you, then you should probably get out of it.

CA: This is visible in some smaller things like the format of the dissertation, for example. I always felt very comfortable about the format, but then my dissertation is of a theoretical nature, so I always felt comfortable for not having the artistic part. Our programme in Porto is called Arts Education, and although it's very open to a lot of proposals, some of the people

are interested in artistic work as well, so they have to kind of fight for having that space inside the academy. So this is what I mean when I say that you can be comfortable, or that you can feel that you have to fight rules, just to find your spaces for your work not to be prejudiced. Do you see this artistic research field, whatever it is, as something that is there for a long time just having different names or is it something that is appearing from recent times? Or is it just people that are becoming more conscious about it, but it was there already? Or it's really happening now, it's something that is emerging like a contingency?

AM: I need to think about this a little bit more but it could be possible that it reared its head after the 50s, in the 60s during the rise of feminist art, during the rise of black art. Yes, it could be possible that then people started to be more self-aware and, in my opinion, maybe looking to communities, looking to where they came from and looking to personal histories as well as the grand narrative of history. I have just thought this now, but this could have geared research to take place, and from then it sort of built its momentum until now. In the twenty-first century it has become a buzzword and people are really focussing on this with all these PhD programmes that are coming up, and people are researching what is artistic research, what does it constitute. I'm just thinking that it could have come about when civil rights came about.

CA: So you think research is a lot related to this self-awareness?

AM: Yes I do, because I feel like it's a tactic, a skill, it investigates communities and individuals.

CA: It's kind of a sociological approach.

AM: And that's how I work so that's why I'm thinking.

CA: Because I can become an expert for example at this small spot here and then I just make it bigger and bigger and bigger, and then I start to go, even to get more detail, and it's just a spot on the floor. And it's still research, right?

AM: (Laughs)

CA: Or do you think that there must be a connection, which this spot has to be related to the context where it emerges from?

AM: Yes, I think that this difference between artistic research and scientific research that I'm like: I think the narrow research of this spot on the floor might be deemed scientific research.

CA: Or just visual research.

AM: Yes.

CA: Isn't research - I'm asking you - about becoming an expert? You are an expert in Vermeer, you are an expert in...

AM: I think it's one of the end goals, but it's not exclusively what it's about. I honestly think it's about questioning and it can, I think for me in humanities, it can be a questioning that goes on for the rest of your life. So it can be a questioning that has no end. Although we talked about the cyclical thing it's not necessarily what I'm saying, but it can be a questioning that has no definitive answer.

CA: I'm asking you for this spot on the floor, but it's just an example. This kind of the sociological approach or the scientific approach makes me think that we are again talking about interdisciplinarity. As if artistic research had to be interdisciplinary to make sense. Because then you can't do artistic researching in apparently more trivial things like purely aesthetical, visual things or things that are not related to anything that should be taken as more serious, you know.

AM: Right.

CA: I was just wondering if you have an opinion about that.

AM: Yes, I think it can.

CA: I was asking because there is some kind of shift going on, I think a subtle change in these programmes. Until now you used to have programmes that are PhDs in visual artists, in performance arts, and since the end of the decade, the first decade of the 2000s, by 2007 more or less, programmes adopted in their names explicitly 'artistic research'. In Finland we have two programmes that are doctoral programmes in artistic research. They are not doctoral programmes in visual art, they are in artistic research. Is this really something specific? Do you think that this might be a change in the development of things, and the fact that they are adopting on purpose in their names is announcing a change in the procedures of the programmes, or on what is produced in artistic research, or it is just a detail?

AM: Previously, when it was let's say a PhD or doctoral programme in performance, was there an element of practice in it?

CA: Yes I think so.

AM: Okay.

CA: These things are not really strict. I mean, there are regulations that allow for the practical part. The written part is always there, this is kind of universal. But there are programmes before the artistic research trend that were already allowing for the artistic part. Actually Brigitte [Kovacs] thinks very interestingly that things are just going back again. It's like these programmes are starting to actually become more and more academic in a sense that they are kind of reducing artistic parts in their dissertations.

Imagine that you are now applying to a new programme and you have these two programmes, one is for a PhD in performance, and the other is a PhD in artistic research. They are both in The Hague and the other conditions are all the same, but they have this different name. I mean of course there's a big difference but you just know this. Would you have different expectations? What would you expect? Do you expect that artistic research would probably be more theoretical for example? Is that true or?

AM: I don't know! (laughs) I understand your question, but I honestly don't know!

CA: So you don't necessarily associate artistic research with something that would be more theoretical for example?

AM: Oh. It depends on the programme, it really depends on the programme.

CA: And place?

AM: Yes, exactly.

CA: Why do you think that artists are too interested nowadays to go to the academy again and to enroll in these PhDs?

AM: I think that on one aspect it's an element of having a terminal degree that everyone else is able to achieve as well. So I think to a certain aspect it's that, which is in a sense superficial, but it's not. And I think it's also an element of being able to research a project so wholeheartedly that it just... and I know a lot of artists tend to do these kinds of projects, when they're older as well, but yes, it's the attraction of doing a project that is like all consuming (laughs).

CA: So you see it much like you have an opportunity to engage, like obsess yourself?

AM: Yes.

CA: Four years or so about one thing, and you don't have to worry about other kind of market requirements.

AM: Right, well although I do but.

CA: Yes but imagine that you earn a grant and you were just doing this exclusively. You can be obsessed with this. This is your life for four years.

AM: Yes. I think that's really attractive.

ERIK VISKIL

Researcher, writer, advisor to cultural institutions and coach of Individual Writing Project at
PhDArts, KABK/University of Leiden, The Hague, The Netherlands

27.03.2015, 13h30 @ room at KABK

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Catarina Almeida: Before PhD Arts programme started how could artists in the Netherlands become doctorates, if at all?

Erik Viskil: I don't think they had good opportunities. They had to apply for a regular university programme or try to find a university professor who would be willing to supervise the project, but that was difficult for artists, since they don't have a university degree in the Netherlands.

CA: But a university programme like?

EV: A university programme is different from an art school programme in the Netherlands; we have a system with two 'streams' of higher education: the university and what we call higher vocational or higher professional education. The university is scientific, scholarly, based on research and striving for research, whereas higher vocational education is more practically oriented.

CA: It's like the polytechnics.

EV: Like polytechnics, however much broader, in the higher vocational education you can even study law, for certain more administrative professions in that field.

CA: So you can be on that stream and then to become a judge you go to the university system anyway.

EV: In order to become a lawyer or an attorney or a judge you have to go to university. So university programmes differ from programmes in higher vocational education in level and in orientation. That's our system, and the art schools are situated in higher vocational education. So, before PhDARTS started there didn't exist a real opportunity for artists. The first art school that came up with the idea of starting a PhD programme for artists in the Netherlands was the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. I remember that I wrote the plan for Rietveld Academy in 2000, and when we published it, there appeared headlines in the newspapers: "becoming a doctor at Rietveld Academy". However, eventually Rietveld Academy decided not

to establish the programme; there were doubts as to whether artists would really benefit from it.

CA: And nowadays are they offering anything like in association?

EV: No, I don't think so, but what could be interesting for you is that they are working on a new, more practical sort of third cycle. In this programme artists earn a title on the basis of research that leads to new artistic work.

CA: But it's not a PhD, so is it like a post-graduate programme?

EV: As far as I know, it's not a PhD programme. It does not result in a written dissertation that accompanies artistic work. The orientation is more practical, it is directed at a higher level of art production. The artist produces a collection of work, which they call the "masterpiece".

CA: But it's still attached to the Master programme or it's independent?

EV: No, it's a third cycle, it follows the Master programme. So they will have a bachelor programme of 4 years, a master of 2 years, and then this 3-year *Creator Doctus* programme.

CA: But it's not an examination, for example, it's something autonomous?

EV: I suppose it also encompasses a kind of examination, like a PhD programme. The aim is a trajectory that runs parallel to existing doctorate programmes, however without the written thesis.

CA: So they are still thinking about it, but it's not in the field yet.

EV: I think they are busy with the preparations. They planned to collaborate with the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Mondriaan Foundation, as well as with an art school in France, and one in the U.K. There is another possibility nowadays in Utrecht. At HKU Henk Slager, maybe you know his name, has established a programme in which he works together with external partners, for instance the Finish Academy of Fine Arts. They provide the possibility to become a Doctor of Fine Arts. That differs from our doctorate, here in the Netherlands.

CA: It's a kind of DFA, a Doctor in Fine Arts, and here is PhD, like, you are Doctor of Philosophy of any area, like, Doctor of Philosophy of the Arts. And then there is Doctor of Fine Arts or Doctor of Arts, I think.

EV: Yes. Did you speak with Henk Slager?

CA: I emailed him, but I think he is in China. I'm still waiting for his answer. Also it would be very interesting to talk to Henk Slager because he's creating all this thing of the Research Pavilion in the Venice Biennial, which is something very interesting for the artistic research field.

But, anyway, we go on. Ok, so there is this thing that is being “cooked” in Rietveld Academy and then in Utrecht there is this possibility. I think that Henk Slager is accepting doctoral students that propose a Doctorate on their own. It doesn't have a programme, right? But he accepts to supervise?

EV: As far as I understood they have individual doctoral trajectories. And they collaborate with external partners, which will be universities, since only universities have the right to award doctorates.

CA: I think it's more or less the same across Europe, isn't it? Except for the UK probably, but in Portugal it is the same thing: you just get the PhD if you are institutionalized in a University, or have some kind of association like what happens exactly in the Royal Academy here.

EV: Yes, but with us it's more complicated, since art schools are not part of the university system. So, an art school has to establish a formal collaboration with a university, or, what Henk Slager apparently does, find professors or universities who are willing to supervise PhD-projects by artists and award doctorates.

CA: Rietveld [Academy] seems not to be interested in a PhD for students. But for example, Amsterdam University, why aren't they interested?

EV: They don't have an art school. They're not allowed to.

CA: They don't have an art school in Amsterdam?

EV: Not in the University. There are no Art Schools within the universities; all the Art Schools are situated in higher vocational education. The Art School in Amsterdam is Rietveld Academy. That is the only one. And as far as I know they are not really interested in PhD-programmes, but there is also an initiative by Jeroen Boomgaard, maybe you know his name ...

CA: Yes, from the master.

EV: Yes, ... he has founded a Master of Artistic Research at the University of Amsterdam, so it could be that they will offer something that... But I don't think there is a programme.

CA: Why was this programme PhDArts created? What is the intention? Is it to respond to some kind of contingency that was happening back in 2008 or something?

EV: I don't know, you have to ask Frans de Ruiter, who created it.

CA: Yes. But it could have been back then that there was this huge kind of willingness of the artists to become doctorates, all of the sudden, like an international trend or something like that. And then people here would have started to think “then we can create a programme to attend their expectations”, for example. It could have been something like this or not. I don't know. Only in this first decade of 2000, more or less, they are kind of popping out a bit everywhere.

EV: It's only a guess, I think people like Frans de Ruiter were aware that artists in different fields, for instance, musicians - he was the director of the Conservatoire - have lot of knowledge and that it is a bit strange that you could earn a Doctorate in every field apart from art. So, why wouldn't it be possible for artists to go for a Doctorate by using their knowledge, presenting their knowledge, or building their knowledge? But in fact I don't know. You'd have to ask him. And the second thing is that the new system, the Bachelor-Master system, provided a new context with new possibilities.

CA: Do you personally agree with that idea of art producing knowledge as research, in the intermediate productions in these programmes and in the outcomes?

EV: It's very difficult to talk about that in general. If you ask me to agree with more specific statements, for instance “there isn't any artist or art work that produces knowledge”, than I think it's false. And if I have to say “art always produces knowledge” it's also false. It is something in between. There are artists who produce knowledge and there are art works that generate knowledge or that contain knowledge. It is an interesting question if every work of art contains knowledge.

CA: Then you perhaps would have to identify certain features or certain characteristics of what you, yourself, consider as knowledge. Like, shareability or communicative skills, you know?

EV: Yes.

CA: You would then consider this thing to be knowledge. You could perhaps have this kind of assessment when you relate to your students' work, for example. I don't know. You would

say to them that their work has to respect this kind of characteristics, otherwise it wouldn't fit in the programme of artistic research?

EV: That would be a very stupid thing to do.

CA: Yet it sometimes happens.

EV: Yes, it sometimes happens. But that would be a bureaucratic approach to art and to research and also to knowledge production. Also in the universities, in the sciences, it doesn't work that way. Of course, they have to commit to certain standards. For instance, in statistics you can't say "well, we asked three people how they reacted on the medicine so it must be a good medicine because they didn't die." It depends on the kind of knowledge you are producing. Is it hard knowledge or is it soft knowledge, is it statistical or analytical evidence, is it a case study...? To account for different kinds of knowledge means that you have to meet different criteria.

CA: Yes.

EV: So, the whole issue of knowledge production is rather complex. It's not only in the arts that it's problematic, it goes for other fields as well. For instance history, history of art, literature, philosophy. What is knowledge in philosophy?

CA: Yes. It's not that I like to approach the artistic research thing from this perspective of the knowledge production, because I find it quite suicidal. We will never achieve the successful conclusion out of this debate of what knowledge is or, define the field of artistic research from this point of view of the knowledge production. There are several kinds of knowledge and to generalize is, perhaps, to kill the possibilities of the field. But on the other hand I'm not sure if without some sort of criteria or this consciousness of the necessity of having some common ground here, you will also open the field to artistic statements without the research field. I don't know if it makes sense. If you don't have the criteria, on the one hand you are completely open and you cannot tell someone that his or her work is not really meeting the expectations of the university, or of the academy, or of the field in general. And, so you have to balance these two possibilities, for one side, something that is too rigid, and, on the other side, something that is just too open-ended.

EV: Art is not meant, in the first place, to generate knowledge. It is meant to generate meaning and, of course, there could be a knowledge effect in it. But to configure art and art practice in a way that it becomes knowledge directed could be a way of changing art or changing a part of

art. You could say, we here, as a group in this or that art school, we are going to produce art and try to meet certain rules about knowledge production. That could be an interesting experiment, but does it go for all art? I don't think so. Do you understand what I mean?

CA: Yes, I understand.

EV: So what you are intending is to formulate rules for knowledge production?

CA: No, no!

EV: Ok.

CA: I don't like that way of thinking as well. But then I'm afraid that, on the other hand, you can also fall into this thing that everything is valid and so the territory of artistic research is similar to the territory of the art world. And so if they are the same thing, why are there all these distinctions going on? Why are we discussing what artistic research is if in the end it is the same thing of practicing art? It has always meaning, production of meaning, as you said. It's not producing knowledge, it's producing meaning. It's not about explanation, it is about understanding.

EV: It can produce knowledge. But it could also be directed at generating affects only.

CA: How do you see this territory of artistic research? Where does it come from? Is it the institution only, for example? Do you see artistic research as a kind of a reality that is emerging as something new?

EV: No, it's not new.

CA: So something that was already there but we just kind of changed the way to look at things, like a paradigm shift but it was already there. How do you think that this thing is kind of gaining structure?

EV: It has always been there. What has not always been there is the influence of, or the relation with cultural studies. And that's a new layer. Do you know ... there's an article by Camiel Van Winkel, he's a Dutch art historian and writer. He has written an article called "The sandwich will not go away", about different layers in art production, in which he describes the role of cultural studies. It's interesting for you, I think. It's on his website.

CA: Ok, thanks.

EV: Research has always been part of art practice. Reflection too. Even in writing. What is new, is that artists *systematically* and *theoretically* reflect on paper on their processes, their position, their field, the materials they use, in principle on everything that is linked to their work. And what is also new is the academization of that.

CA: So it is kind of introducing a new *medium*. What is new is that they fix their reflection on writing notes or on paper. It's sort of introducing a new *medium* in art practice.

EV: Also that has been done before. I don't think it's a new *medium*. It could be a new medium but it's less rigid, things can have different forms in different practices.

CA: But didn't you envisage this writing tendency as a new way of doing art or does it sound too absurd?

EV: No, no, it could be. It could be that for some of these artists it becomes a medium, but that's not a tendency. There always have been artists who wrote, for instance Mike Kelley, he wrote a lot. And that was balanced with the other practices. So, if you could imagine an artist that doesn't make art apart from writing...

CA: He's a writer, probably.

EV: No, he can still be an artist, I think, in that case writing becomes his *medium*. At Rietveld Academy I started a department of writing, so a department of language and image where the students were taught by poets, writers, novelists, artists, filmmakers. But what we're talking about now is theoretical reflection. So could you be an artist by writing? Yes, you could be.

CA: But that's a little too extreme because I don't think artistic research is just about writing... reading and writing. It's part of the process.

EV: Yes, it's part of the process. So there is research as part of the process of creating, and there's a research as part of reflection, and there is research as part of the development of the person as an artist, and I think when those three things come together it becomes something like artistic research.

CA: And do you think that this thing of becoming artist researcher could be the kind of thing, of subjectivity, for the contemporary artists? In a few years, when we look back, will we say that contemporary art in the second decade of 2000 was a lot about being artist researcher?

EV: Many years ago I saw an exhibition in the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven – in their temporary space -, and they had a show on the history of their collection. There was a part on

the 70s, and there were a lot of paintings in a similar style, and sometimes I thought: “this is terrible, this is too much of the same”. I think in every period there are good and excellent things done, and things that are not so interesting. At present we see a lot of artists writing, and I think that after a few years the good things will be known and the less interesting things forgotten.

CA: Hopefully that's what will happen. (laughs)

EV: Yes, but it could also be that part of the artists will change their practice. I think that individual change, that's more plausible.

CA: There's a reason for me to be asking this, because in Porto, where I come from, there is this very conflicting situation in the Faculty of Fine Arts. It's sort of a silent war going on that precisely divides the artists that are 'the gatekeepers of the art territory' and then there are these people that are becoming more academized or academicized. And so they are starting to integrate this writing thing and this reflection thing, this thing of being an artist researcher, although they don't call it like that. And then there is this dualist model, these two sides don't get along because these artists regard writing and this thing of journals and papers and conferences, as being completely outside the territory of art.

EV: Yes.

CA: These other ones who want to dialogue, but the first ones refuse to dialogue because they think that asking too many questions is - I don't know exactly why - like destroying the territory of art, because art simply happens and you don't have to question it.

EV: Yes.

CA: The non-theoretical artists feel they are really the ones who are doing art and we - or them, I mean we, because I'm doing research so I probably fit this other block - we are kind of profaning the territory of art, because we are introducing these things of writing and questioning, and we want to talk. Through talking we are removing the aura of art practice, and this is why I'm interested in understanding what the roles of this writing and this reflection in the art today are, so that there is a possibility of integration. Not that I want art to become purely theoretical, because that's also kind of strange. But at the same time I don't think that art just happens.

EV: It could just happen ... So your question is: what is the benefit of all this writing, theorizing and reflection?

CA: I don't know if it's benefit. Benefit supposes that we have this polarity between good and bad.

EV: Yes, or successful and not successful.

CA: It's just about trying to notice that something has happened, realising that this is happening, not only in Portugal, but across Europe, across the world this is happening. And to just turn away from it doesn't solve it neither integrates it. It doesn't make it make sense. So we have to try to understand why it is happening, what's the reason for it and what are the consequences or the impact that this is having in contemporary art. Although it comes from the academy, it's intimately connected with art production and the art world.

EV: Well, what you could say is that our world, as we experience it now, is extremely complicated. Of course life has always been complicated, but it's getting more complicated because of the many layers, the numerous possibilities, the overload of information, and technology. It could be that the artist must inform himself better about the world when he wants to react on the world or when he wants to be part of the world, and wants to connect to the world. You can connect to the world without knowing anything, you can connect to the world with knowing as much as a lot of people do, but it could also be that you need a higher level of abstraction, and a higher level of knowledge, and a higher level of reflection, in order to have a better understanding of the human condition and to do things that make sense. That could be one answer.

CA: So the option to just don't care about it is also a way to connect to the world.

EV: The option not to care about it is an option to connect in a negative way. Which can have positive consequences. I know artists that are not so much interested in critical reflection and who are not interested in theory. However, in their work they achieve an extremely high level of understanding. So, I have to admit that the confusing situation exists that it's not always the case that the artists who reflect, write and theorize are the ones who understand the situation best.

CA: I don't think that people that are writing and reading and writing about what they're reading and producing something new, that they're necessarily the ones that are relating in a more, not enlightened way, but in a more interesting way to... But on the other hand, I think that my problem is that I don't understand why wouldn't some of these artists want to talk about their work. Of course they are reflecting and when they produce something, some object that they exhibit, there is a lot of knowledge that goes on and complex relations that

they do, but then why wouldn't they agree to just try to deconstruct it a little bit. Like making it available for some other approaches just that you can...

EV: Their knowledge?

CA: Yes, knowledge. What does the object mean? Is it containing these relations? Do they contain all this reflection of their own and do they produce something that they exhibit?

EV: Yes.

CA: And you go to the exhibition and you see this object. But you don't have access to the reflection or do you when you look at the outcome?

EV: Sometimes you have, sometimes not. That's the problematic thing about your research, that everything is possible in art. Art is pluralistic in its approaches and practices: with theory, without theory, with reflection, without reflection, partly reflection, knowledge production, without knowledge, "not yet" knowledge. Everything is possible, so it's very difficult to talk in general about it. The only thing you can do is to describe interesting cases.

CA: And because everything is possible, I tried to limit the universe of research, and I hope that this thing of the academy being present somehow limits the focus of this art production. It's as if the academy would put some limits what is valid or not valid as artistic research. We are not anymore talking about artistic production out there, we are talking about a specific kind of artistic production that is called artistic research. So what is this? Does this follow some rules or some conditions that the academy imposes? Or is everything valid as well as it is out there?

EV: That has to be found out and it has to be proved. It is not the case that there are, as far as I know, that there are explicit detailed rules. Of course, artistic research in this context presupposes artistic work and a written reflection, so a discursive treatise. Both the artists, I think, and the supervisors, and all others involved, are curious at this stage about which demands the research will meet, and will have to meet. We're in a situation now that an artist is working on something in a certain way and the people involved in the research ask themselves is this enough to become a doctor? I know a professor in the University of Leiden who is very much in favour of this programme. He is from a totally different background, and he is much stricter as far as methodology is concerned, but he says the project needs time, and we have to see what comes out of it. Maybe we have to do this 10 years, 20 years, in order to see how it develops.

CA: Yes, exactly. Because it is the outcome of this programme that will define the field and we have to wait for that. But you are also acting as a supervisor of students of PhDArts?

EV: No, no. I help them writing their Individual Writing Project.

CA: Do you find resistance by these artists that engage in this programme in the writing and in the reading and in these routines?

EV: Yes, however not persisting, and certainly not negative, it's all very intelligent

CA: And why do you think that they are resistant?

EV: They have been trained in autonomy, and when you write something in a semi-academic setting, you have to meet at least some simple rules. As far as I am concerned these rules are not restricting, but an artist can have the feeling that he is already restricted by simply following a rule of how to document his readings or to account for the sources he has used. If someone states a question, you presuppose that he's interested in the answer. I've read articles, not by these researchers, but by artists also working on a PhD, who asked questions in their introduction but didn't answer them. They even didn't return to the question in rest of the article. They just jumped to another subject.

CA: But that would be to keep it open-ended or it's just distraction?

EV: I don't know. It could also be that they don't know that they are doing that. In making art you follow your own standards – you are supposed to have standards of your own, and these must be very personal. But when you write about something, and you want to communicate, and you want to convince someone of the acceptability of your point of view, then you have to meet certain standards of communication. Otherwise you won't be successful in conveying the information; it stays something for yourself. So, when you're part of a research community, you need to meet its standards of communication. It's the same if you, as an artist, are functioning in artist community, then you also have to meet certain standards, but these are more complex, more hidden, and ambiguous, and more difficult to understand.

CA: When you talk to your students in the Writing Project, you talk to them about this resistance of theirs in what concerns writing, or you try to understand yourself why are they making the questions and then not being interested in the answers, for example?

EV: No, I try to figure out with them what they are doing, and what the consequences are of what they are doing. However, if they don't have any questions in their article, I ask them to

formulate a research question: what do they want to answer in the article? And sometimes you see that it's very difficult to formulate a question, and when it's difficult to formulate a question you see that also other aspects, apart from the writing, are difficult. Sometimes someone doesn't know exactly, I mean very precisely, what the topic of his research is and what he wants to learn about it.

CA: Those who find it hard to formulate a question in the Writing Project, most likely their artistic part will also not be inquiring a lot?

EV: No, could be! But, for instance, if you write about just something you can write a lot without writing down a question. You can read books and sum up what they say. But in order to make your article, or book, or what you're writing, relevant as research, there must be a kind of question. Putting forward a question implies that you don't know the answer, that you don't have the knowledge, doing research is about producing knowledge by finding answers. Research is not-knowing or a desire to know. But the questioning is only an example. It could also be something totally different: how to structure your story so that someone else can understand? What I try to do is that I play the role of a reader who reads very carefully and who believes in the project, but at the same time wants to be convinced by the text. I want to understand it and I want to be convinced. So, if I can't follow it I say: 'Well, I don't understand this. What do you try to say? Do you try to say this or that?' So it's about communication.

CA: Is the written project not necessarily related to their practical part, is it something that you do in isolation?

EV: No, that's also something I like to see, or which is necessary, they are artists, that they establish a relation between their own practice and the writing. Because otherwise the research could have been done by anyone.

CA: If someone has not this ability to question things in his or hers written project, then is this person possibly able to do that in the artistic part?

EV: Yes, but it could be that artists are not always aware of the questions that are underlying their art practice or their works. I think they are not aware of it because the questions are mostly ambiguous and they can be extremely complicated. But I think that when you write, your story and your questions and your answers must be clear because you want someone else to understand it, and that is another way of understanding than when it's about art.

CA: Do feel that resistance to writing, for example, is kind of...

EV: They don't resist to writing, but some would like to do it completely their own way or they don't know the conventions. And there are also those who are not resistant at all. When you say "well, you can do it this way", it's possible that someone does it that way immediately.

CA: But so this kind of not-always-so-easy relationship with writing that you perceive in other students, is that related to a fear of institutionalization?

EV: No, I don't think with these students, they are in the programme. With some it could be that they fear everything that is governed by rules.

CA: But then why are they in an institution?

EV: You could talk with Wjm Kok. Because Wjm Kok refused to commit to certain conventions, arguing that he is allowed to because he is an artist, but as an artist he wrote a PhD thesis.

CA: That's funny because in the Faculty in Porto we have this teacher that also did a PhD two or three years ago, that in English the title must go as something like "Nothing at All". So it is a dissertation about nothing because she's completely against the research system and the academy. But she succeeded which is interesting. So how is this possible? This is problematic, I think, and funny at the same time. Because you can do a work which is about nothing, and still it's a doctoral dissertation. It was accepted by a jury, it was publicly defended and the teacher is a PhD - about nothing, probably?

EV: Yes. Well, in that respect you have to talk with Wjm Kok, because he takes a strong position as a researcher being an artist. But I think there won't be a second Wjm Kok. In the Netherlands not, I don't think so.

CA: Why do you say that?

EV: Well, he is one of the first who did a PhD project as an artist and so he had to find out what it was. I told you there are no rules, no explicit specific rules, and that these are being developed through the process. There are still no explicit rules, but I think that somewhere in the back of the minds of the people involved there will be the idea that it is difficult to have someone say: "I don't have to account for anything because I'm an artist". And when they say: "In a doctorate thesis we expect you to account for your assertions, it's a discursive treatise". "Yes, but that is not my problem, it's your problem, because I'm an artist." That's what he said, and it is interesting, I think it's very interesting, because that is what contemporary art is. It can do everything that other people do as well, or could do as well, but artists do it in their own way, according to their personal standards. An artists can have dance as a medium, he could

even work at the Royal Ballet and make a work there, and when people from the Ballet say “that is not how it should be done”, he can reply: “I’m not interested in dance or ballet. I’m an artist!” And I think that is one of the most powerful aspects of contemporary art: artists can jump over to any other domain without committing themselves to their standards. What they do remains art.

CA: (laughs)

EV: So, when you apply this to the defence of a doctorate thesis, the one who states this may be right as an artist. But he maybe wrong if you look at his position from the other side!

CA: Yes. Or, “since you have accepted me in this programme, that is your problem now”, I think.

EV: (laughs) Yes.

YOTA IOANNIDOU

Visual artist and doctoral student at PhDArts, KABK/Leiden University, The Hague, The Netherlands

17.04.2015, 12h00 @ Yota Ioannidou's studio in Amsterdam

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Catarina Almeida: Why are you enrolled in a PhD? Why are you interested in doing a PhD?

Yota Ioannidou: I'm sure there are many reasons. It's not only a reason. First of all, it was that I'm doing the research for my work. So somehow I find that it might be interesting to organize it in another way. Because I'm reading a lot and I have to write a lot. And I was thinking that it might be proper to dive into a specific substance, something that we don't do as artists.

Necessarily in order to research and into read certain books, you know. At least, myself I was here and there. So, it might be a good reason, to organize that part. Then it was also the fact that I came back to Holland. This is personal reason actually. And so practically too, it might be a good solution, to have some grounds and to continue to read and write.

CA: But that's the main reason? You could do that research by yourself.

YI: No, no, no. I cannot do it by myself in that way. I will never choose exactly that way. When I'm doing something by myself I'm more lost. Somehow you have a setting that you have a lot of feedback. Which is interesting and especially if you're abroad. You bring the different network, you know of people. There are many practical reasons to do that. To be honest I'm not interested that much to be an academic in terms of teaching.

CA: It is not the case that your object of study, your topics, did you pick them on purpose for the PhD? Or it's something you were already interested in and the PhD feels like an ideal condition or environment?

YI: It's an ideal institutional condition for different aspects, for different reasons.

CA: Is there any special reason for your doctoral programme to be PhDArts and no other option?

YI: Yes. I had the same dilemma when I did my master. Because I'm always studying a lot of local social history, political aspects. Somebody told me "Go to that university to do political science". Then I was thinking that I would lose myself, you know, into too much theory and not

produce my art works. So, I was always picking up programmes that somehow concentrated into the artistic practice. And for that reason I chose this PhD. In other case, you know, you can get lost only in the text. Somehow you have to reflect on your own practice. You have to develop your practice.

CA: It interested you because of the practice emphasis?

YI: You reflect on your practice, actually. So that means that you have to develop your practice. It's not about reflecting on the project that you did a few years ago. Or when you propose you researching something you have somehow to feed your own practice. That is the same in this way: the practice gives back to the theory of research.

CA: And did you find any other programme that could balance both things in an interesting way, or at least, as interesting as this one?

YI: Or they are super practice based, as in the UK. Many programmes that I'm not interested in that. You have to do more grounded research. It's not about what I think for your work. So, in this PhD I found it interesting in the terms of balancing the theoretical part and the art production. And I don't think are that many, you know. In Vienna, then in Scandinavia... Yes, there are not that many. Or they are strictly theoretical or they are practice based and now, somehow, I think this PhD tries to bridge these two parts.

CA: It's your second year now?

YI: No. First.

CA: And so far, is it meeting your expectations?

YI: In the first year you are a bit more lost, you know?

Both: (laughs)

YI: But until now it's not something different from what I was expecting. There's quite a flexible way to work with, but of course, you have to write in a very academic manner, papers and that stuff.

CA: When do you have to deliver the Individual Writing Project?

YI: Next week.

CA: Is it the only discipline that you have on the curricular part of the PhD?

YI: It's a part of the curriculum, but you give also our presentations and you serve progress of your research every two or three time per year. One in the beginning and also in the middle. In the two semesters you give two presentations, then one in the end. So you have enough for how to see how is your problem and your progress.

CA: But apart from that you don't have to report, at least officially, to your supervisor?

YI: In that way you report, I think, for the presentations. Where we you standing now. And then you have the Individual Writing Project, also it's a part of that.

CA: The responsible person for the Writing Project is EriK Viskil?

YI: I have Janneke Wesseling.

CA: It seems quite a fact that currently artists are going back to the academy. At least, there is kind of a wave. They are going back to attend these PhDs. It's something that is more or less spreading, and you see it by the number of programmes that are popping up a little bit all over the place. What's your opinion on the reason for this to be happening? Artists always had a kind of controversial relation to the academy and now why are they going back to, or interested in having one foot inside and other outside the academy, if you want?

YI: Yes, I think there are many, again, different reasons for that. It's the financial evolution, the huge unemployment by artists, so they are trying out. It's better to teach BA students instead of teaching in an elementary school. (laughs) If you can do that, you try to balance it between your living and your art production. I think one reason is that, so you have to develop very competitive skills, and the other it is really related to the society that we're living. What are the demands around, the skills, this kind of investment to your skills and in order to... I think one is this and it's really sad, somehow. But the other is, I think it's a good way to emancipate artists by having the need from curators or theoreticians to address their own issues. So you can really build the skills with which you can address the problems with. Address, you know, what you're doing. I think in a PhD this is very crucial. Because we talk about knowledge production and all of these discourses around the knowledge production. I think it's quite challenging how we can do it, what are we proposing through that process, as artists. This is interesting for me. It's very good that the creator to be able to develop some theory, instead of leaving to other people to do that.

CA: But in that point, would you think that a doctor of art, or PhD artist then can be exempted of the curators and critics?

YI: No, no. It's not a problem to be exempted. It's more about to be capable to do it by yourself.

CA: Ok.

YI: And I think it's a tradition around artists who have, at the least during the whole XXth century, artists that were writing, that were really about the theory, they were really creating theory. So, it's very important to continue this kind of tradition. Without the strict limits of academy. If it's possible.

CA: The only thing is that before this wave of going into the academy again, artists were already trying to do that in their own way, like trying to dialogue with the critics and the curators.

YI: Yes, that's true. I think it's more intensive this way. Somehow it is something more legitimate, which is again a question: why has it to be legitimated to do that? I think, also it's a new thing that there are many negative and positive aspects. So, you have, you know, to see all of them and then it has to do how you deal with that, how you save your own position for that process. It's many years to see how this is going evolve. Anyway, academy is changing totally, humanities are changing totally. Also, it's a very strange political condition for education, and we're coming into that period of...

CA: Education comes to art and art enters education. It's this situation with the two territories.

YI: But again it has to do with your view, you know. There is also an amount of ways of how to bridge art with pedagogy, with theory... With many important major voices from theater, from Brecht to... The thing is which institution is accepting do that and this is maybe an obstacle, but we're in a very conservative period for the universities.

CA: Now?

YI: Yes, of course. All the new ideology, the Bologna Agreement is... Also in Amsterdam now, the UvA, the squatting movement. It's good not to exclude that from that process.

CA: I have checked your profile in the PhDArts website and I've found very interesting links between what you're doing and the notions that you're interested in and the notion that I'm trying to figure out about artistic research. There are a lot of connections that I think are possible to be established. And I'd like to bring some of those aspects of your research and

try to intersect them with these lines of the notion of artistic research that I'm trying to figure out. So, in your introductory lines there, you seem, at least to me, to stress this notion of collaboration in your work. You say something, like, you've been '... employing paradigms of my artistic practice, work of other artists and interdisciplinary collectives'. What is the role of this collaboration thing in your work? Do you find yourself as a collaborative artist? You work on collaboration usually?

YI: I'm doing both. But I see it in the process of researching and it is not possible without the process of collaboration. Collaboration in terms to research, because one person cannot achieve by itself to produce, to decide an amount of knowledge... It's dialogic. It's dialogic for me. And collaboration is very important, in order to have a broader understanding, to create a dialogic relationship with our subject, with the other people. Also in the process, also in the output, it's very important for me.

CA: But it's an option or you think that it's kind of a necessity?

YI: At least, the way that I'm working, I'm always engaging other people. I did a project in the past, and it needed a lot of knowledge about economics. If I had to spend, you know, the time by myself to do that, it was impossible. So I collaborated with an economist.

CA: But you are speaking of collaboration from the point of view of research. And from the point view of contemporary art, do you think that contemporary art has relation to these buzzwords that have become terms, like collaboration, interdisciplinarity, networking...?

YI: Yes, for sure. Everybody uses the term collaboration, participation, but you have many different qualities in that. So, it's also a matter of serious reading of collaboration. For me it's political. It's not about practical manner only; it's about, a decision to share from the beginning of something.

CA: Yes, I think it's very important that you have that kind of serious approach to collaboration. Because it's very easy nowadays to fall into this situation where collaboration seems like it is the end product. You have some projects where the goal of the project is to collaborate.

YI: I know also this kind of projects and some are quite successful. I mean, they succeed to offer a model of collaboration. Which is also important, how you collaborate, you know.

CA: But you should collaborate to achieve something. Not just to collaborate.

YI: Yes. This is about a manner of fashion, you know.

CA: Yes, that's why I was saying the buzzwords, like fashion words. And sometimes they lack the substance.

YI: Yes, what I've said about qualities before, you have to define that part.

CA: It's interesting that you're saying that from the point of view of research, you find collaboration a necessary thing. Because you do not research on yourself or by yourself, you have to call on contributions of other people, for example the case when you had the work about economics. But at the same time, I'm interested in seeing if isn't this point of the collaboration also something that is splitting or putting apart artistic practice and artistic research. Because in the context of PhD, for example, you can do your process collaboratively, yes, but the end product is your product, it's not of the collaboration. You don't have a thesis that is a collaboration or that it's collective. It's your thesis, your individual content.

YI: Yes, that's right. So far the PhD research is very individual... It's about authorship what you say, actually. I perceive it more like authorship. Yes, in the case of PhD you can't look at it as a collective, I think. But you can establish collaborative approaches.

CA: People collaborate in the process, but you present the product individually.

YI: Then you have to reflect on the process, give it individual. I think in the case of the PhD is individual. On the other hand, it comes as if the individual voice is developed through a dialogue with the others, in a way. You cannot speak so much of individual approach. It's not true. You're sharing and you figure thinking process through the others. It's something dialogic. But the thing is who is signing that at the end. That's the only problem. As you said it once. Which is different with an art work.

CA: Is there any possibility that artistic research happens outside this institutional framing? For you? How do you see this assumption that says that artistic research is an institutional thing? It only happens or it is only worth the name artistic research when it happens inside an institution, like, an academy or a university.

YI: Yes... can you repeat it?

CA: There are people that say that artistic research as a concept only happens or only is possible when it happens inside an institutional framework, for example in an academy, a PhD or a University.

YI: I don't agree with you.

CA: And why not?

YI: Because this existed anyway outside this kind of institutions. Even myself, I did a lot of research based art work, outside of the institution. It's more about how to establish that research. It's about the legitimization of the research. And I think it's more about these aspects.

CA: But it may happen that these aspects of legitimations are what make us name the research, artistic research. Like setting a condition. Otherwise... Artists always have done research in their work. That's a characteristic of artistic practice.

YI: No, no. I don't agree. This is also very general. I don't believe all the artists are doing research. I think there are some artists that are super self-expressive. Ok, of course you can go into a museum, you can see other artists, but research in terms of the definition it means that you're seeking for something with persistency. And I don't believe all the artists do that, anyway. It doesn't mean that they don't produce good art or important art. I don't think everybody is doing research. It's very, also, dangerous to generalize the term. I think that presupposes some persistency. Subjects and modes that you know you're doing in long term also. You cannot speak about research like: 'I did a research in one week', you know?

CA: Do you think that some aspect of artistic research is that relation with time?

YI: Even if you want to produce an art work you need some time. As much time to spend that you dive into what you're going to do there, you'll get a better result, you know. Time is important. It doesn't mean that brings you...

CA: But, if you have to be obsessed with an object, then you need time.

YI: Time is relevant. It can come with certain experience you've learned in your life and you can live in a certain social condition. You can produce a great art concept. But the time in terms of research is important. And for that reason PhD students have four years and not one. It's very hard to do this fast, you know. But it's not the distinction. It's not the most important point to distinguish.

CA: It depends on what you do with the time that you have in front of you also, because you can spend one year with an art project, and you don't do anything about it.

YI: Yes, yes. Moving around something.

CA: And time is irrelevant to that case.

YI: Yes.

CA: You titled your research project as: 'Research based art as docudramaturgy: performative aspects of research based art at the beginning of 21st century.'

YI: Yes. I have to rework that. It's huge. (laughs)

CA: Three aspects stand out for me immediately. They are documentation, performative aspects and research based art. So, what do you mean by performative aspects?

YI: Very general speaking, it's what is "underlied". Ok, it comes from the Speech Acts Theory and all that stuff, but for me is interesting to see, to research when we're doing research and what is "underlied" through that. We're addressing, for example, a political subject. And as an artist doing this research, and presenting that there, in that institutional setting. And on the other hand the performative relies exactly into the motives why you do that and what is inscribed there. You have the formulation of something or the performance of something, but the performative is exactly the inscription of that subject. So I'm interested to see from which point of view you do a research. What is it, is it a trend, is it a political position, for example? What is the inscription?

CA: The performative aspects that you are mentioning are the motivations to do the research?

YI: No, no the motivations. There are certain inscriptions. The performative is actually: I'm saying that, but there is an inscription with that. It's not what I'm saying, it's what does this. What are the power structures underlying that texture, when the research is the texture.

CA: Ok.

YI: It's not that far from all these things that you ask me before. Why are we researching? I'm speaking about specific kind of research also, and it's not general. And putting more research based art projects dealing with documentation through dramaturgical perspectives. So, I want to read the performative area.

CA: You consider or you don't consider that artistic research or research or arts based research, whatever...

YI: I think that is different. There are many variations.

CA: But I will call artistic research then. Do you think that all artistic research is performative or it depends?

YI: It depends.

CA: So you don't think that every research acts.

YI: The research acts anyway. But to avoid into generalize again the term, I'm interested to those that are claiming something and there is something hidden there. Claiming this and there is something different inscribed there. I'm interested in those paradoxes.

CA: But don't you think that every research does that? For example, discourse, from my point of view at least, discourse is not just language. Discourse is a specific thing and every kind of discourse is performative in the sense that it does not only describe the situation or describe the work. It produces.

YI: Yes, but you have to define the performative.

CA: A performative discourse is a discourse that produces more than describes. When you say something you are not just describing the situation. You're somehow producing when you say it. In one situation you are just describing, like, passively, and on other situation you have an underlying intention, you are constructing some reality, some alternatives.

YI: Without a doubt, yes. The performative is actually something that produces a social or political new condition.

CA: And documentation, is it always performative or...?

YI: I'm not talking about documentation. I'm talking about docudramaturgy. The title it's about dramaturgy of documents.

CA: Dramaturgy of documents is...?

YI: Those practices that are using documents or they create documents. So, what are the dramaturgical aspects of that and then, how you read the performative of that process and output.

CA: And where did come your interest for dramaturgy?

YI: I think the dramaturgical thinking combines research, theory, performance and how you address the audience, how you engage the audience. It's a very broad multitasking work. And I don't mix it with theatricality. I'm not talking about the theatricality of research which can be a huge subject also. But I somehow see the projects that I'm interested into, the terms of production of collective research material, of production and performance, or events or discussions or whatever, I can read there many dramaturgical aspects. And I'm interested to that and from its historical perspective and the evolution of dramaturgy, and the fact that we don't mention it, as artists from visual arts we use the term performance, but we don't introduce the dramaturgical thinking, which is, from Brecht, Artaud, Lessing. It's a huge history around that, which is important to incorporate some concepts. And looking around for some modes of dramaturgy that can be different in the art fields, but we're also borrowing scenarios from...

CA: When you're mean dramaturgy you are not limiting yourself to theater and stage.

YI: Not, not at all. I'm talking about dramaturgy and of concepts of dramaturgy that are coming from theater, from Brecht, for example. How to embody political art, how to apply politics to art. Not to talk about politics, but make political art, which is very important to understand what that means. I'm researching those modes of dramaturgy. And I saw some relevance of what I want to achieve through my work and so I'm studying these cases.

CA: Apart from that dramaturgical specificity of your work, I'm going to bring documentation along. I think that a lot of the discussion about artistic research is connected to the idea of documentation. You discuss or you should discuss, at least in my opinion, the ways to fix knowledge, to present it, to archive it, to distribute it. And it's all related to documentation in a way... Actually, I think that's one core issue, I don't know if you agree or not, one core issue of artistic research should be the question of how do I document my research in a way that I distinguish it from my artistic practice? As if my research is one thing and my artistic practice is one thing, at least in the institutional environment when I'm doing a PhD, I cannot say that this is my artistic practice only. Something different happens there that it becomes my research and perhaps it's the way that I document it or that I document the process. I don't know. Do you feel this is a concern of yours or you simply overlap the two things?

YI: Yes, yes, yes. And you have posed it very effectively. (laughs) It's something that you have to deal in the future, in general, in the terms of PhD and artistic research because it's like double research in a way. And somehow this is the challenge, how to bridge that without to split these two things.

CA: Without split and, at the same time, without just doing like a make-up operation.

YI: No, no, no. This is the challenge, I think. This is the pain. Because it's impossible to research two different things. You have to find a component to bridge that. And also, maybe that is the way to produce how think differently as artist researcher.

CA: But it shouldn't be a double research task.

YI: Exactly. In other case it splits. So you have to bridge it, to bring forms into your writing process. Or to talk about these forms. But I'm in a very early stage, I cannot be that clear. Now I'm writing this Individual Writing Project. But in order to write it, I decide, 'ok, what is my practice? I want to bring my practice there'. So I started to meet people because I wanted to define the term of docudramaturgy, I wanted meet people from archival science, dramaturgs . So, ok. I go and make discussions and I will bring them into the text. But I have them as an appendix at this moment, because I don't have the time to implement them properly into my text. I didn't have the time to implement them properly in an essay. So, I'm taking some parts but I put an appendix in order to show that this is necessary for what I'm saying. I think this is a part of my practice. Even there I tried to do that, to bridge the way of working into the way that I have to work towards the PhD.

CA: But at the same time you say that 'in your art practice the research process itself becomes the art work'.

YI: Yes, yes.

CA: So, in part you are overlapping the two things...

YI: When I'm saying the research process I mean I created many times events and performances that were researching collaboratively. Then it gets people, even the audience. So that was the performance, and the process became the final articulation. Or research material it comes always in the front. It's not something that stays in the final object. It's always there. You have to deal with that part of my background. It's there, it's exhibited in a way. But I'm trying anymore to stage it. I'm trying to the process itself to be the actual result. Not to stage it, if it's possible not to stage it. Not to stage the research. It's very boring. You

have to, somehow, to perform it. And to make the others to perform that. To invite the others. To recreate all with the audience, to make the audience researcher, or to make the audience performer without imposing that, but, in a way, if it's a subject that they are interested into.

CA: Ok. It's interesting. Will you dedicate a part, or a section, or a chapter of your written dissertation to publicly position yourself as an artist and as a researcher? Will you dedicate a part of your text to publicly position yourself in regards of research in the arts? Like, position yourself in confrontation to this meeting of the academic constraints and the artistic practice or you don't think that it's important to do?

YI: That moment I don't think about that at all. (laughs) In terms of what I'm researching now, I'm not interested at all to define that part. Because I see myself anyway as an artist that does research. So, I don't want to distinguish that part.

CA: Ok.

YI: But I think, I'm not sure, it's a demand to define that. Because we are asked quite often from the PhD.

CA: I don't know if it's a demand or not, or if it is going to become a demand. But for this moment, this present moment where these things are happening now and, like you said, we need a lot of time ahead to see how things will develop in the future.

YI: Yes, yes.

CA: But somehow, I think that what artists are doing in the academy today at the PhD level, is always calling for this necessity of positioning yourselves in the presence of this conflicting situation of being an artist and doing artistic practice and then, all of a sudden, you have to dialogue with the constraints of the academy and so you have to say publicly how you position yourself in relation to the variety of demands, for example, or the academic writing, or everything that academy imposes you. Then you have two options if that is not the demand. You can just do your business, your work and try to figure out things in the correct balance of everything, or you can, if you want, have a small part of the dissertation where you just make these things clear. It's not your topic of research of course. It's not your subject, main subject at least. But you can feel or not the necessity to pronounce yourself in relation to this issue. So, I'm asking you if you think that it is an important thing for the development of your work.

YI: No, I don't think it's important. Not for my case. I have a problem to pronounce myself as something. It took me many years to pronounce me artist. (laughs) So, I don't know if I can really pronounce me as an academic researcher. I think it's something that you have to do and, ok, you do the PhD, but you have to continue, you know, of that mode of producing work.

CA: While you do not pronounce yourself but you still do the research, you think that your position will become visible in your practice anyway, even though you don't pronounce explicitly.

YI: Yes, yes. I think it's something that... Yes, I don't know, for sure. I don't know. I cannot be sure. But, at least at this moment, I don't feel the need to clarify that part. I think it's not one of my concerns, but what's going on in general. But I feel that it is a concern by others, especially from academia.

CA: You can just say that it's not your problem: 'It's not my problem. It's your problem, academy'.

YI: Yes, yes, yes. It's not my problem.

CA: Do you know Wjm Kok, the one that has graduated already from PhD Arts?

YI: No, no.

CA: I heard about the situation where he refuses to consider himself a researcher or to pronounce himself in relation to these research things and he says exactly this: 'this is not my problem, this is your problem'. So deal with it.

YI: You have to confront that also as artists, you know. Because then I'd have to pronounce me archival artist, and then to pronounce me research performer, etc. That's not my problem, it's your problem; how do you want to define that part. I'm doing what I'm doing and I want to be explicit about what I'm doing.

CA: But you think you'll be demanded to do that?

YI: I don't know. Maybe. It's a question: how you position... I'm not sure. Actually the question is how you relate your artistic practice to your research and to your PhD research. So, that's my activity now. What I'm asked more intensively is that. Because you can say: I'm this and that and that, and that. Which is all so easy. (laughs)

CA: And how is your relationship with writing both in your artistic practice and in the PhD? If different.

YI: It is different because in my artistic practice I'm writing in a very free manner. And I have to refer this preciseness to over define some parts. It's not about finding in my artistic practice. It's about to represent some ideas. Because I'm using also a lot of texts. But in the academic writing you have to be super precise and relate it always to certain concepts, or you have to present them there. Something that in artistic writing is unnecessary, because you underlie something. It's a more implicit process.

CA: But do you have a conflictual relationship with writing?

YI: It's very hard for me. It takes much more time.

CA: But you feel like resisting to the writing demands or are you just...

YI: I'm trying.

CA: You're trying to resist?

YI: Not to resist. I'm trying to make it...

CA: ... peacefully.

YI: Yes, because understand also why. It's about the language, it's a different language. So, I understand why. Why it has to be mentioned like that, why it has to be broken like that. So, if you want to communicate in that environment, you have to build that kind of language. I understand that, but on the other hand, it's challenging to try to introduce the other voice in there. Their voice and their languages.

CA: So you don't think that it would be very useful for artists, being artists, but still enroll in a PhD, to just to refuse to answer the demands of writing academically. You could just say: I'm an artist, I don't want to write.

YI: For me it's not a problem if there are some obstacles, and some things that concern as "negative". It's not about the academic writing. It's about context itself. It's about what the structure of the writing... How far you can go, how you can state loud something. This is the only problem. It's not about to refuse to write in that way. Which is super difficult, anyway, for artists, but still for me it's not the main problem there.

CA: What do you think that is writing? Even if academic writing, it could be performative in some way.

YI: Yes, of course it can be performative.

CA: That could be an interesting situation for artists?

YI: It could be super interesting subject to develop a thesis.

CA: What do you mean when you say that ‘the structure of my essay will have a structure that is similar to my art projects’?

YI: I’m trying to include my art projects normally or my art demands. It’s the clippings, archives and archive material. They’re very much layered in terms of text and pigments. And I’m creating many associations through them. So, I want somehow to work in that way for the text. I’m going to include short stories, theoretical, background reflections. Yes. Short stories, like these conversations, the act of conversation. It’s very difficult, I think, editing and writing all that still.

CA: But I think short stories are nice because there is also an idea that artistic research can be somehow this creation of complex narratives.

YI: Yes, yes, yes. To have different voices, stick to them. Sometimes, even with my writing skills. Because you don’t have to structure it perfect, so to bridge it in a nice way. Something that I can achieve to my art projects, but in the writing, in this writing, I’m struggling, to create this kind of associations.

CA: Yes.

YI: I need some time, yes.

CA: When you say essay, you mean the Individual Writing Project, or the thesis?

YI: No, the Individual Writing Project. And it’s a model that I want to continue to write like that. I have to find a formula.

CA: And as an artist, how do you feel about the institution academy? Do you somehow fear this institutionalization or do you find it challenging doing the two things?

YI: Sometimes I feel it the one way, sometimes on the other way. (laughs)

CA: That’s good. There’s still always the dynamic.

YI: After my master, I had five years. And then I thought: 'Come now back to the academy, why? I have to have all this kind of deadlines that...' I mean, you have deadlines anyway as an artist but you need that stuff.

CA: Exactly.

YI: But I get somebody to supervise me. But when you are reaching some points, you know that you're learning something, you feel quite happy. So you have mixed feelings. On the one hand the fear and on the other "wow", you know. It's nice, a good buzz. You stay in some parts with many interesting people and very nice colleagues also.

CA: Yes.

YI: But you see, you know, what are the problems. You can see. I mean, even with you now, we discuss the cause of that institutional context. So... mixed, mixed.

CA: Do you think that the issue of artistic research is having an impact in contemporary art in general? Is it influencing, for example, international exhibitions or the way that artistic practice is being written down in the present or, for example, in the future when we look back, will we somehow see the artistic practice of the beginning of the twenty-first century as being artistic research or something like that? Do you think that this had an impact, a direct impact in the way that artists produce art today? Or it goes in parallel?

YI: I think it goes parallel.

CA: So you think there are two trends?

YI: Yes, there are two trends.

CA: They don't necessarily meet?

YI: Not necessarily interfering. But, maybe in the future there is a possible impact of mixing that. Maybe.

CA: And do you think that it can be somehow related to, for example, the weight, or the expression that are having publications today in artistic practice, like, *e-flux* or...

YI: But it's already... It happened...

CA: It's already from before, yes?

YI: I mean, yes, there are many artists writing...

CA: Or, for example, this Venice Biennale, it will have a Research Pavilion, so it's a pavilion dedicated to artistic research.

YI: Who is doing that?

CA: Henk Slager, Jan Kaila and Anita Seppä, well people from Northern Europe, but mostly it is for artists from Helsinki. They are having this Research Pavilion. That's also why I am asking this. Because it makes me think. At the Biennale that is...

YI: Maybe the...We still have to observe it to see which is the developing through time again, because maybe it's a trend. Because of an institution and expectations, they have to over promote that kind of...

CA: We need time to ascertain that. Just one last question. When you see the contemporary artists, or the way to be an artist today, that subjectivity of the contemporary artist, and if you had to define the contemporary artist, how would you do that? Or what are the characteristics that you think that are more important for a contemporary artist?

YI: (laughs) It's a good question.

CA: You can generalize. I'm just interested in trying to see what are the terms that you use or the skills that you think that are important. There are different artists, of course.

YI: Exactly. So, I don't want also to exclude the artists that are very different from my own practice, which are very appreciated. Appreciated also by others, even though I'm not interested to do that. For me, I'm interested more to a critical voice towards what's going on in our society. For those artists that are able to reflect and self-reflect, through their art work, to be critical. Those practices that are quite critical. Questioning things there and addressing issues that are somehow not hidden. I think artists need this kind of responsibility. Awareness of what's going on around and also to be self-reflective. How can I say it? Informed by political perspective. I think artists must at least achieve this kind of critical voice towards the society, towards its own system. It's quite difficult, but you can fake it also (laughs). But for the artist's vision to be self-critical.

CA: So you don't see the research skills as a crucial thing for doing contemporary art?

YI: No, I don't think it's the only way. I'm interested in that mode. I think it's not the only way. That's the good thing with art, I think. There are many ways to do it. But I'm interested in that way because for my personal point of view and the way that I feel myself creative is to include

that part of researching of something in my process and output. It's my joy. I like it. How can I say it? I like it. But it's not necessary. For sure not. Artists shows are artist's statement also. Art can be a statement. You don't need to research. You can base something on your own experience and emotions.

CA: But in the academy you cannot do statements.

YI: If you are clear you can state anything actually; if you somehow define them in the proper way.

CA: Yes, but as an artist I can just say 'the sky is not blue, but it's green', for example. But in the academy I will have to prove that the sky is green.

YI: Yes, it's true. But I can use, that somebody said, that this person said that the sky is not green, it's blue and I'm stating that.

CA: It's about argumentation.

YI: So, if you can argue about that, that's it. The problem is we have to learn how to argue in that context.

JANNEKE WESSELING

Art critic and co-director of PhDArts at KABK/University of Leiden, The Hague, The Netherlands

26.05.2015, 17h30 @ Janneke Wesseling's office at KABK

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Catarina Almeida: What are you talking about or what do you think of when you talk of artistic research, or research in and through the arts?

Janneke Wesseling: I think about art practice. So, to me, only artists can do artistic research. So that's why I would prefer the term research in and through art, which I think covers the thing and is very clear, but of course it's much too long. But it describes exactly, I think, what it is. It's research in and through art. So, as I said, only artists can do this and there are many theorists, of course, very interested in the field and they may have interesting contributions to artistic research in a theoretical sense, but they would not be the people that we would accept into our programme.

CA: When you speak of artistic research, you automatically think of an institutional frame of artistic practice. You speak of a programme automatically or you consider artistic research as a practice out there as well?

JW: I do not consider it as identical to artistic practice. So, even though it is part of artistic practice and only artists can do it, I think when you call something research you mean something specific by it. And to me what's specific to research is that you decide to share your insights, your dilemmas, your thinking process with peers, with other people and you bring it out into the open. So it has a public aspect to it. You join into a public discussion that's going on somewhere within academia or within the field of art. Why would you call it research otherwise? So to me that is the core element of research: it is this partaking in a dialogue with peers or other people in the field.

CA: Like starting a conversation?

JW: Yes, but not just any conversation, but in either an academic environment or in a public environment.

CA: When was PhDArts founded?

JW: It started with the first two candidates in 2008. But our sister institution, docARTES, which is for musicians, and sonologists, and composers, started five years before that, in 2003.

CA: And what were the main motivations to create a Doctoral programme, like PhD Arts. What is the idea behind it?

JW: So there are two lines of answer. One would be the institutional answer and one would be personal motivation. So maybe I should start with the institutional answer. Since our Hogeschool, our Art Academy cooperates closely with the University, it was only logical that, after the Conservatoire started with the PhD research in Music, which is docARTES, it was only logical then also that KABK, which is the Art Academy, would join with the programme in Visual Art and Design. So the logic behind it is that we as the entire Hogeschool, which consists of the Conservatoire and the Art Academy, is a collaboration with Leiden University. My personal motivation is that, I think that is very important and also empowering, perhaps, for artists - but who knows maybe also for scholars, but certainly for artists - to have access to the highest degree in art education. In fact, before this PhD existed, the arts were the only discipline in education that did not have the third level. So that was a kind of injustice, but I think it's very important that artists have open access to this highest degree and also to this scholarly debate. It's not that that's the most important dialogue or debate, but it's very significant for politicians, for people that make the policy for museums and for cultural institutions that they know that artists are also able to partake in an academic discussion.

CA: Do you feel that need in the part of artists as well? Do you feel that they have that need to have that terminal degree in education themselves?

JW: Not all of them, but some certainly do. Maybe only 5% of all artists or maybe 10% - I don't know, we never researched it - that has that need. I think it's a growing number of artists and these are artists, I think, that come out of the heritage of conceptual art. So, of course you could argue that artistic research is an institutional kind of thing that came into being only because of the Bologna Agreement: I call that a cynical way of reasoning. It's certainly probably true up to a certain extent, but it would never have happened if there had not been a ground for it already within the arts themselves, and this ground, this fundament, I think goes back to the 60s when conceptual artists started positioning themselves as researchers and they made it explicitly clear that, according to them, art is a way of making statements about the world, and gaining knowledge about the world, and engaging in a debate on political and societal issues. So, I think that's for me the legitimation for this type of research, because I

think it really comes out of art practice itself and not primarily out of institutional context. Although, of course, I can see the danger of institutionalization, the danger is certainly there.

CA: Yes. I will go back to that a little bit later, but for now... Why 2008? For any specific reason?

JW: Practical reasons. Probably, mostly because I was around. (laughs)

CA: That's a good reason, yes. (laughs)

JW: I have worked as an art critic since the early 80s and always the conversation I had with artists has always been extremely inspiring to me and it still is. I think that the way artists look at the world and their specific gaze to me is extremely inspiring and also gets me insight into reality in a way that I never have been able to gain otherwise. So for me it was very natural to sort of continue this conversation and try to bridge the gap that we've had in The Netherlands between Art Academies and the University.

CA: Is PhDArts still the only programme in The Netherlands that offers the Doctorate in artistic research?

JW: Yes, as an established programme and as an institution within the humanities. So other universities do offer every once in a while certain artists the possibility to do a PhD, only if a certain Professor somewhere is interested in a particular artist, which means that the artist does not get the PhD within the Visual Arts, but in, for example, Philosophy if this Professor is a philosopher.

CA: For PhDArts the artistic result is the main thing and the focus of artistic research in general is located in the artistic field. Would you say that this is the same as claiming that artistic research, as a field itself, is somehow influencing the developments in the artistic field of contemporary art? Is there a connection, a direct connection, between the outcomes of the field of artistic research and, maybe not the individual works of students, but in general, as a collective effort? Do you think it is possible to identify any kind of influence in the contemporary art field coming from the efforts of artistic research or is still too early to detect such a thing?

JW: I definitely think there is an influence, which is something else than saying that it's a specific genre of art practice, but of artistic outcome. I don't believe that there is a specific genre like you have painting and sculpture and then you have research based art. That sounds kind of nonsensical to me. But I definitely believe that there is a lot of influence of this

research attitude in the art world and it is demonstrated by the policy that in The Netherlands, for example, that de Appel has and Witte de With. So, smaller places, and definitely Casco and BAK, who try to focus less on showing art as a collection or a presentation of art objects that are finished, but who are much more interested in engaging with the artists in a dialogue and then show the thinking process or the creative process, which does not necessarily result in a finished object that's on sale. So it is a sort of counter movement, I think, to the commodification of art. It's not the only counter movement, but it's one of the many counter movements against the commodification of art.

CA: So you will never ascertain or observe the impact of artistic research in the objects. For example, if you have a student that graduates in PhDArts, or in other programme, the object produced will not be necessarily different after graduation. It's more something that happens in the process and probably the biggest transformation happens at the level of the subject, rather than in the products themselves. Is that correct?

JW: I think that on an individual level hopefully, and I believe it is so, that you can detect what happened during the whole PhD trajectory, and at the individual case, if you know the work, then you can say: "Ok, he or she is doing this now and this artist would have never been doing that, if he or she had not done this research." But that's not the same thing as saying "We can recognize research based art as a specific genre in art" because I don't believe that. But I believe that doing this PhD research is such an enormous challenge and is so fundamental that if the student succeeds in completing it, that it's a major transformation in one's life. And not only on the level of art practice, but also personally.

CA: I feel that we are talking about the process of subjectivation. We have to look at this process of subjectivation in a polarity. There are two sides of the question: for the one side I think that artists probably may look at the opportunity of artistic research as a way to, for example, to empower, as you said, themselves. In an emancipatory process they look for the experience of artistic research to somehow acquire new skills or to bettering their own practice in order to dialogue with curators and critics, and to have control of the public-ness of their works.

JW: Yes, absolutely.

CA: So not to be trapped in commercial entrenchments and all that stuff. But this is one side of the subjectivation process. The flip side of the issue might be something coming more from the side of the skeptics, that is looking at artistic research as a process of

subjectivation, that actually performs a tremendous narrowing of the possibilities that otherwise art practice would have if the subject - the artist researcher or the student - wouldn't enter an institution and play the rules of that institution. And in this case the subject becomes an object of the institution as he accepts to play the rules. And when I speak of the rules, I'm speaking, of course, of the academic writing and this necessity of explanation, of communication, and of making everything visible and somehow shareable and appropriate by others. This is debatable of course. Do you see artistic research as a possibility for artists to operate in the field without becoming an object of this institution?

JW: Of course, institutionalization might be a threat if we were to develop very strict academic criteria for the outcome of the research. I can think of several dangers, but one of them would be if you were to develop strict criteria to which each artist has to satisfy. So I think the challenge is to keep alive this tension between the criteria that there obviously are, and the uniqueness of each artistic project. Of course when one talks about it in general is very hard to demonstrate it. But when I think of one of the students that hopefully will be graduating with us in November... Her topic is called "Immersion and Augmentation in Video Art". Immersion being the idea that, for example, if you watch a Hollywood movie, the idea is that you lose awareness of the *medium* as such and that you become completely immersed in whatever is going on, in the narration or in the fantasy or whatever, so you kind of step into the screen. Augmentation is something else. It's like our daily experience of life is augmented with new and larger possibilities. So, in augmented reality the video artist invades reality, which is something else. It's a different movement. Through her research, in this particular case, she not only discovered these two strands and how they are rooted in their own traditions, and she found out a lot about what artists in these two different fields do, and how they differ, and how they relate to each other. But she also discovered that where she thought that her practice was an immersive practice, she found out that actually what she was doing in many cases in her own practice was in the area of augmented reality. So through this research a lot of her own dilemmas and questions have been clarified. And personally I think that, unless you are extremely cynical, but I think that artists who are able to clarify their own dilemmas and questions will be able to take a next step in their practice and these answers will open up new areas and they will be much more articulate about what it is they are doing and what they want to be doing. So I would imagine that the products of this art practice or the art practice itself improves. But I think you can only see that on each individual level.

CA: Yes, talking in general is not accurate and not even fair.

JW: No, it's not fair, and doesn't do justice to what these people are trying to do. But does this convince you? Because you have become somewhat skeptical yourself about artistic research in that context.

CA: I'm not skeptical about artistic research in the sense that I think that it doesn't add anything to the practice. It's not that the case. It's more about the amount of literature, for example, that is published about artistic research that tries to make it some other thing that it actually isn't. Artistic research is more like an attitude, and some of this literature tries to dig too deep in the epistemology of the thing. I think it's more about rooting artistic research in the practice as art is, and not trying to differentiate the kinds of knowledge that can be produced in artistic research because it's not different of what is produced in art, for example, so that's my...

JW: Hesitance.

CA: Hesitance about it, thank you. I think artistic research is much simpler than it actually seems. That's my point.

JW: Yes. I think it is actually quite simple and the problem is that a lot of the writing that has been done on artistic research is writing by theorists. And we have an enormous lack in good examples and artists themselves should of course further the discourse on artistic research, and I hope they will be able to. But really some of the dilemmas that you point at, I think, are not so different from a student in the BA phase and it happens all the time that they are afraid of gaining knowledge, they are afraid of really acquainting themselves with artists that move in a similar field of interest as they do themselves, because they feel that it will that it will be a threat to their creativity and to the uniqueness or authenticity of their work. The knowledge that they gain will take away all spontaneity and creativity and will take away their big desire to make their own things. I think this is a huge mistake. It's really a mistake in thinking. If your creativity dries up because you gained knowledge, then it wasn't really very interesting to start out with.

CA: One thing about artistic research, I think, is the fact that it's still suffering a lot from this Romantic heritage and the Modernist influence of the artist: 'We shall not talk to artists, we shall not ask him to explain himself or herself'. I think it's just too present nowadays still, and sometimes very explicitly, but most of the times it's very disguised in the daily acts that these students and these artists do. And I think that most of them they don't realize that they are still playing the Romantic or the Modernist artists. This thing of knowledge that you

are talking about, this fear of getting knowledge for themselves, I think it really portrays the situation.

JW: Yes. So I agree with you. I think this is so strong that sometimes people think if there is an artist who is very eloquent then he can't possibly be a real artist. You know?

CA: Oh yes I know! (laughs)

JW: This is one of the prejudices if you ask my personal motivation. If I can contribute in revealing this as false then I'm happy. And of course I know that it's a huge trouble this PhD research, and only very few will succeed well. But here artists are no exception because this is true for all PhD research. There are only a few in each field that are really creative in their PhD research, no matter what discipline it is, and there are really successful... Some of them will, with a lot of struggle, get their degree and everybody will say: "Ok, we did it." It's ok, but it's... you know. And then there will be a few that will be brilliant and I see them coming in my own programme. I think what some of the people did in the Individual Writing Project is really inspiring to me.

CA: I liked a lot the texts of the Individual Writing Project actually.

JW: Some of them are really quite good, uh? And if you see what they started out with and what they did in nine months - they went from one side to the other. If they can do that, so if they can accept critical questions, if they in fact enjoy this dialogue and the collaboration, then I think they will do fine and then I think that it is so important for themselves, but also for the art field to have people like that.

CA: Do they have to do the Individual Writing Project every year or once in the course?

JW: No. It's once to get them to write, to acquaint them with some of the academic tools, how you deal with sources, bibliography, footnotes, references, etc, and to learn how to build up a coherent argument, and they do it once because next year they have to start working on their first chapter or the introduction... or maybe they may start with the fifth chapter, it doesn't matter.

CA: I'm asking because the other day the students that were in the meeting are from different years.

JW: Yes, that's true. That's because we did this for the very first time, so I decided to open it up also for second year students and for any student who wanted to do this. But from now on

we'll do it only with first year students and the idea is that from then on they will have to be able to... Well, they cannot do it on their own, but at least they know what they are getting into.

CA: Why you think there is this resistance to writing on the part of the students? I read the document that you have as a guideline for the Individual Writing Project and it says exactly that in the first paragraph, that usually the students don't find it easy to write in an academic way. So you find this resistance rooted in this thing that we were previously talking about, of being afraid of acquiring knowledge or something that they have inherited from Modernists?

JW: Yes. I think it's threatening. Sometimes they are afraid of losing their artistic identity. So they are scared, but the resistance goes much further than that, because even though on the one hand they enter into this programme - they want to be here - they have learned to be resistant no matter what, because they are artists. So they will resist whatever it is that you offer them and these are the really hard cases because they make the people they collaborate with, their supervisors or me, into a caricature of the institution and they have to fight this caricature. And it's a great escape because it gives them a way out of the need to think through their own presumptions. So they project all their fears and their doubts on the institution. So we have had quite a few of these students and if we do not succeed - this may sound quite dramatic but it's really so - if we do not succeed in breaking their resistance, the project will not succeed, because it can happen only on the basis of trust and collaboration. So if they are not able to get to that point where they can say: "Ok, you know, I trust you all. I trust this environment and I trust that the critique that I'm getting is sincere and it is meant to help me." If they don't get to that point, they will not succeed.

CA: They should be the first ones to realize that if they don't want to be influenced by these people then they should go somewhere else, I think.

JW: Yes, but it took me five years to discover this. Because I also grew up with this idea of artists being very autonomous, and of course they are critical of everything. It took me a long time to figure out the relationship between the attitude and this context. It is very complicated.

CA: Do you think that when the students finish they will keep writing routines, they will be publishing? Is that being incorporated in their artistic practice for the future?

JW: So there is a very interesting line, which I really love, when you receive your piece of paper, the big thing. It's a very happy moment. The Rector Magnificus of the University has a ceremonial speech. There is also a personal speech, but part of his ceremonial is the same for everybody and the last sentence is... I do not have the exact phrase, but the last sentence is "And please never forget the responsibility that you took upon yourself to honour the academic..." practice or research, something like that. And I think this is quite beautiful because it means that once you have received the highest grade that exists, you bear a responsibility to further the community that you are now a part of. So it took me also six years before I could ask an artist in a programme simply: "Ok, this is what you want as an artist, but what do you want as an academic?" And it always comes with a big shock because they say: "I'm not an academic." I say: "But you are. If you have a PhD degree, you are an academic. So what do you want as an academic?" But again it took six years before I had the clear picture myself. But they are academics and this does not in any way harm the fact that they are artists. They are an artist and an academic.

CA: I suppose that many of them don't take being an academic so easily, but more like a burden that they have to move away.

JW: No, many of them won't but...

CA: The defenses are in English or in Dutch?

JW: The two that are coming up are both in English. You should come!

CA: I'm not here then...

JW: And you can't come over?

CA: If I have solved 'my problem' by that time, of course.

JW: Yes.

CA: Are the increasing events such as these conferences, seminars, lectures, all these events of discussion related to art and academia, also the many Doctoral programmes that are emerging and the platforms such as journals, as a kind of *new materialism* in artistic practice that ironically derives from the dematerialization? As if to discuss this dematerialization of art that post-conceptualism has originated, a *new materialism*, if you can talk of materialism of these events that are the conferences, seminars, etc., etc., etc. Do you think we can talk of

***new materialism*, and of what these events produce, articles and books, dissertations, as an alternative artistic practice or they are not an artistic practice at all, they are something else?**

JW: Again I don't think we can generalize here. Personally I don't like this term *new materialism*, that's a real hype and everybody is using it. I think nobody quite knows what it is or at least there is very little agreement on it. I think art works are so special, they are a separate category, a category by themselves, among the category of objects or things. And I think the reason this is so is because an art work always says something about the world and simultaneously it says something about itself. There's always the double-layer, always. So when we look at that thing by Roy Villevoye [a photograph on the wall of the office] it is about the fact that he goes on a trip and he brings presents with him to/for this people in Papua New Guinea and of course it's that all story. At the same time it's about the art of photography, about perspective, about this image that is very strangely coming up as if it's being pulled up, almost parallel to the picture plane. In that sense it relates to the history of painting. In fact, Roy started out as a painter. It says a lot about painting techniques, about the pixels that you have in, etc etc. So it says something about, what I would say, the world and it says something about itself and this is intentional. You could call that materialism because it says something about itself as a material object. And you can never see the two things at the same time. You can either see the story and become interested in the story or you look at this material object, and it goes for any art work, as a material object that speaks about itself. Now, if that is what is meant by *new materialism*, that would say that if we declared our conversation as an art work then immediately a new layer is added, where we are not any longer only - well it's not 'only' because it's very valuable – but no longer only exchanging ideas, but we're also aware of doing it and of the whole setting and all kinds of things that we would like to include, either the dress code, which is quite similar by the way, etc, etc. Then you add a new, you could say, material layer to this conversation, without necessarily even changing the content of the conversation, but a new layer is added. If that's what's meant by it then I would agree, but I'm afraid that's not what it is. But that's how I would interpret *new materialism*.

CA: My choice of *new materialism* here is more in the sense following the narrative of post-conceptualism where the art's object, the commodification of the art object, was questioned and emerged forms of art like art as an event, and this contributed to this dematerialization of the art works, and then succeeded these events and these discussions, these new art schools parallel to exhibitions, created to discuss all of these developments. So, I'm choosing the term *new materialism* more as an irony to this thing, because the narrative of dematerialization has somehow originated all this production and as a production it

generates products and as product we are in face of *new materialism*. Like to struggle the dematerialization has originated more material.

JW: So are you saying we are commodifying the research?

CA: I'm asking. I'm not saying. I'm just asking if these events or these conferences, these programmes which regard themselves as resistance to the commodity of the object at some point, regard themselves as a critique to this commodification, aren't they risking to being sucked by...

JW: ...commodification?

CA: Yeah.

JW: It's possible. It's possible although I hope that, for example in our case, I can't speak for other programmes, that we will be driven by the practices of the artists that we accept into our programme and they will define what it is that we are doing and also each new student, each new project will slightly change my view of what we are doing. I hope. In fact so far it has done that.

CA: This observation that I'm making comes from what I was previously saying that there is so much literature about this and most of the literature is not really significant to the theme. So it turns the thing all much more complex than what I personally think that it is.

JW: We must not forget that this is true for almost anything that we do. The same with art criticism. I really like to write for the newspaper. I love it. It was always a very difficult task, it's become my hobby. I love doing it, but I hate reading about art criticism.

Both: (laughs)

CA: So you just write and you don't read.

JW: Yes, I think I can let myself do that now because I've been doing it for so long and I'm established in that sense. I project my doubts and questions somewhere else. Now I project them in the field of artistic research. Not in why am I writing about art and how I am doing it. I've never really enjoyed the discourse of the art critique very much. In The Netherlands every five years art criticism is declared dead. It's just the first time it was a shock to me, I thought: "What a pity. I'm just beginning and it's evidently over." And then this happens again and again and again, so I don't take that very seriously anymore. Well, that's the advantage of doing something for a very long time, it becomes a craft and I'm happy with that. You either do

it or you engage in a discussion on why and how you are doing it, but these are two different things and sometimes I think these things are mixed up, same with artistic research. You cannot criticize your own work and do it at the same time.

CA: You can't?

JW: Not exactly at the same time. So you do something and then you can reflect on it. So very much... When talking of artistic research I very much like John Baldessari that says: "Doing art is questioning how to do it." But you can never do it. You cannot see the narrative and see the object, which is a meaningless object in itself. So before you can question something, you have to do something. But these are two different frames of mind, they are two different types of activity and I think all good artists do both of them and in artistic research we bring them to the surface, we make it explicit.

CA: In artistic research, you can't do work and criticize it at exactly the same time because it's not possible. But isn't the challenge of artistic research a little bit like going from one place to the other, all the time, this going forth and coming back, practice, theory, practice, theory, practice. Because you cannot merge practice and theory.

JW: No, no.

CA: It's like a utopia, right? But you are always moving from one to the other.

JW: Yes.

CA: Producing and then thinking about the production, and then thinking and from thinking produce again, and it's this kind of movement, isn't it?

JW: Yes, I agree, but it's very difficult this movement. Because either people tend to drown in the reflection or they say: "Now I can't write for half a year. I really have to dedicate myself now to doing the work." So I think, when you have the privilege of reaching maturity and a certain age, this process becomes lighter and faster and quicker, and you can sort of play with it.

